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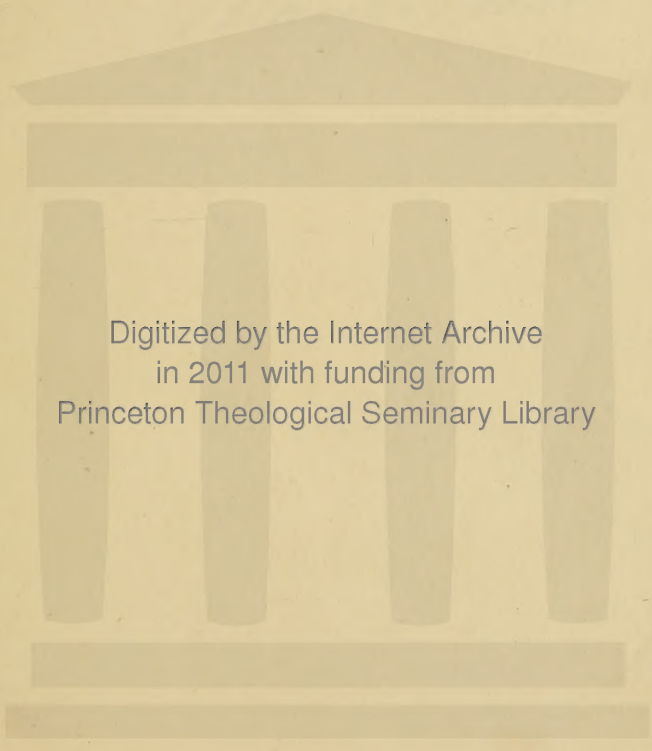
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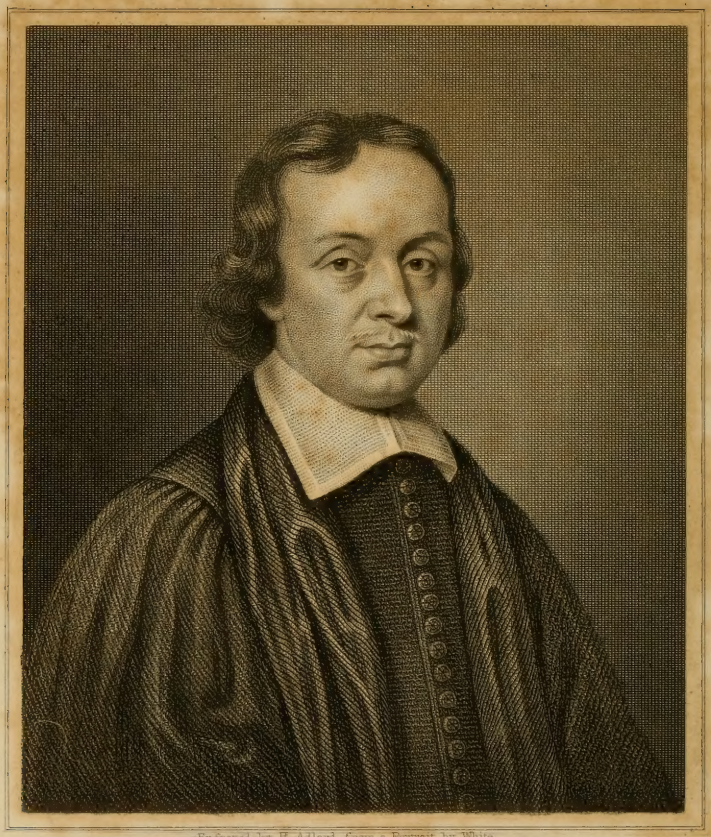
March 1835 —



Engraved by H. Adlard, from a Portrait by White.

ROBERT LEIGHTON,

Archbishop of Glasgow.

London, Published by James Duncan, 37, Paternoster Row, March, 1829

THE

WHOLE WORKS

OF THE

MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

ROBERT LEIGHTON, D.D.,

ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY

THE REV. JOHN NORMAN PEARSON, M.A.,

OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE
MOST NOBLE THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY.

Οὕτω θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων θείων καὶ εὐδαιμόνων βίος, ἀπαλλαγὴ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν τῇδε, βίος ἀνήδονος τῶν τῇδε, φυγὴ μόνου πρὸς μόνον.—PLOTINI ENNEAD. 6, L. 9, c. xi.

A NEW EDITION—IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

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A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY ON THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

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PREFACE.

A NEW edition of Archbishop Leighton's Works being called for, it was thought desirable to accompany it with a more complete life, than has yet been given to the world, of their venerable author. To accomplish this object no trouble and expense have been spared by the publisher. Old sources of information have been explored anew; and inquiries have been instituted wherever there was even a faint prospect of collecting materials, which had escaped the diligent search of former biographers. It was indeed to be apprehended that, after the lapse of nearly a century and a half, little would be obtainable from local recollections; and that the voice of tradition, if not totally silent, would speak only in broken and indistinct murmurs; and such in some degree is the case. The shadows of forgetfulness have closed upon almost all that Leighton

said or did, of which the memory has not been perpetuated by its connexion with matters of political interest: and of those little anecdotes which have reached this distant period with his name engraven on them, the descent is commonly so obscure and uncertain, that it has been thought better to reject what may possibly be genuine, than to run any risk of admitting what is spurious. It is almost needless to state, that a considerable portion of the ensuing narrative is drawn from Bishop Burnet's History of his own Times; nothing of any consequence which is told in that work being omitted in this memoir. To the present compiler, however, one fund of information has been opened, to which none of his predecessors had access. He alludes to a manuscript letter, of which, through the kindness of Mr. Duncan, he is now possessed, which was addressed to Bishop Burnet by Mr. Edward Lightmaker, whose mother was Leighton's own sister. It was the happiness of this lady to have her brother for a member of her household during the last ten years of his life; so that her son had great opportunities, though his tender years prevented his reaping the full benefit of them, of storing up interesting particulars of the Bishop's life and conversation. To verify by external evidence the manuscript so fortunately preserved to us has been

found impossible: but the internal proof is so strong as to preclude any reasonable doubt of its being the autograph of Leighton's nephew; and its genuineness being ascertained, no question can arise about its authenticity. The composition of it is confused and disorderly: for the worthy writer in noting down the memorable actions and sayings of his revered uncle, as they occurred to his memory, has interspersed many pious and affectionate remarks, which, however creditable to the kindliness of his nature, are prejudicial to the distinctness of his narration. It has exercised the sedulous care of the present biographer to extract the valuable portions of this medley, and to arrange them in the order that chronology seemed to prescribe, or that served best to illustrate the Archbishop's character. One of the surest proofs of the genuineness of this document arises from four letters subjoined to it, which purport to be copied from Leighton's autographs, and are so thoroughly imbued with his incomparable spirit as to place their parentage beyond dispute.

Besides drawing largely from this mine, hitherto unwrought, I have endeavoured, by ransacking a variety of records for incidental notices of the subject, to enrich this memoir with new particulars, and to rectify former inaccuracies concerning facts and dates.

To this end, the manuscripts in the Advocates' Library, and the Town Register of Edinburgh, have been carefully inspected; and nothing, I believe, has been overlooked that would have contributed to the object in hand, among the various papers in the College Library at Glasgow. Moreover, the "Memoranda of Dr. Robert Leighton, Bishop of Dumblain, by Bishop Kennet," which are among the Lansdown manuscripts, have been collated with the chapter in Wodrow's History which treats of the attempted Accommodation, and proves to be a transcript from the former, with a few inconsiderable additions. For some of these researches I have been indebted to Mr. Fleming, the Librarian of Glasgow College; and for some to Dr. M'Crie of Edinburgh, than whom an abler auxiliary could not be desired in biographical investigations. The Rev. Mr. Grierson, also, the respectable minister of Dunblane, has been at pains, which, I regret to add, have proved unavailing, to detect any relics of the venerable saint, that had not yet mouldered away, or been discovered and enshrined by some antecedent historian. Upon the whole, however, the success of our researches has outgone our anticipations; and scattered fragments have been redeemed, which are found, when put together, of a value that well repays the labour

it has cost to gather them up. If not sufficient to fill up, yet they narrow the chasms which broke the continuity of the holy Prelate's life; they connect and illustrate many incidents of his public career; and the intervals of his several appearances amidst the scenes of his eventful era are at least so far contracted, that we cannot fail to recognize in him, as often as he revisits us, the friend with whose mien and carriage we are happily familiar.

In the biographical relation now presented to the world, the public conduct of Leighton is discussed in such detail, as may possibly be deemed an invasion of the province of history. But I felt it incumbent on me to treat this part of my subject with an almost historical minuteness; because, after balancing friendly against hostile representations, I became fully satisfied that those actions of his life, which might seem to tarnish his fair fame, can be so regarded only when misunderstood; and will be found, if truly represented, to set the seal on his reputation for purity of purpose and for religious devotedness. In delineating Leighton's personal character, it has been my steadfast aim to avoid the ensnaring fault of drawing a beautiful portrait, and naming it after the subject of the memoir, instead of copying with scrupulous exactness his real form and features. Accordingly, I

have endeavoured, as far as was practicable, to let my readers see him act and hear him talk ; and in executing this purpose, I have found the letter before adverted to incalculably useful. In many instances the words reported for the Archbishop's are transcribed ; and where only his sentiment is given, conscientious, and I trust successful, pains have been taken to exhibit it pure and incorrupt.

After attempting a general account of his merits as a writer, and of the characteristics of his mind and style, I thought it unadvisable to go to any length in reviewing his several works. To enumerate their excellencies would have been endless ; and candour did not seem to require their blemishes to be pointed out, except in a solitary instance, inasmuch as those blemishes are few and unimportant ; surprisingly few and unimportant, when it is considered how wide a range of science and learning his writings comprehend, and that none of them were designed for publication.

It is greatly to be deplored that some of his productions, which came into the hands of his earlier editors, are since irrecoverably lost. I allude particularly to his discourses on that masterly summary of christian doctrine and practice composed for the Ephesians by St. Paul, on which the powers of

Leighton's congenial mind could not fail of being happily exerted. In an advertisement prefixed to the first edition of the second volume of his Commentary on Peter, published in London in 1694, Dr. Fall says that these discourses are in his possession, and he holds out a prospect of their being hereafter printed: and Mr. Wilson, in his Preface to the edition of 1748, speaks of trying to recover them. Mention is also made by Dr. Doddridge, in his Preface to Wilson's edition, of a large collection of the Archbishop's Letters, communicated by Dr. Latham of Derby, and by the Rev. Mr. William Arthur of Newcastle, which were meant to be inserted in a future and more extended life. But the hopes thus raised have died away. Enough, however, remains of this extraordinary man, to establish his title to an illustrious place in the highest class of theologians, as well as in the glorious company of saints. The hours which the compiler of this memoir has spent in contemplating its subject have not, he trusts, been misemployed, as relates to his own improvement: nor will they have been wasted in respect to public utility, if body, colour, and distinctness have been added to the portrait of a christian, whose ideas of the holiness which becomes our spiritual calling, far

as they surpass all vulgar conceptions, were yet realized, to the utmost that human weakness seems capable of attaining, in his own habitual walk and conversation.

LONDON,
21*st December*, 1824.

THE LIFE

OF

ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

THE name of Leighton occurs in some of the oldest annals of Scottish history. It belonged to a respectable family, proprietary of the barony of Ulishaven, otherwise called Usan, which is a demesne in Craig, a considerable fishing-village in the county of Forfar. Of this name the spelling is very various, as will commonly be the case with the patronymic of a family, of which the scattered vestiges appear at wide intervals in the wilderness of the unlettered ages. It is spelt Leichtoune, Lichtoun, Lyghton, Lighton, and in several other fashions, which are not respectively fixed to certain dates, but seem to have obtained indiscriminately in the same eras. One may remark, however, that the modern orthography of the name is the same which presents itself in registers of the greatest antiquity. In the Rotuli Scotiæ, which have lately been published from the original records in the Tower, we read that A.D. 1374, John de Leighton, clericus de Scotiâ, obtained a safe conduct to Oxford, there to

prosecute his studies. Whether this zealot of literature was of the Usan race cannot now be certainly determined. To the ancestors of that family, however, may be assigned the meed of sturdy warriors, on the authority of a quaint chronicle, which relates that

> Schir Walter of Ogilvy, that gud knycht,
> Stout and manful, bauld and wycht,

being sheriff of Angus, was killed in 1392, at Gasklune or Glenbrerith, near Blairgowrie in Perthshire, by a party of three hundred Highlanders. Ogilvy, with Sir Patrick Gray, Sir David Lindsay of Glenesk, and about sixty men, encountered the enemy. Gray and Lindsay were wounded; and Sir Walter Ogilvy, Walter Leighton of Ulishaven, his uterine brother, and some of their friends, were killed.

Besides this testimony to the prowess of a Leighton in the days of feudal lawlessness, there is proof that in the beginning of the fifteenth century the same family was inscribed in the lists of ecclesiastical dignity and political importance. Mention is made by Keith, in his catalogue of Scottish Bishops, of one Henry Leighton, parson of Duffus, and chantor of Moray, "legum doctor et baccalaureus in decretis," a son of the ancient family of the Leightons of Ulyshaven, who was consecrated Bishop of Moray in 1414, or 1415, and was translated about ten years afterwards to the see of Aberdeen. He was one of the commissioners sent to London to negotiate the ransom of James I., with whom he returned to Scotland; where he is supposed to have died A.D. 1441.

Although it may be received for a fact, that the subject of our memoir was descended from this ancient and respectable family, yet it has been found impossible to trace all the steps of his pedigree. The family itself had undoubtedly declined in wealth and credit, before the birth of the individual who was destined to reflect upon it a new and transcendant lustre: for it is on record that, A.D. 1619, a part at least of its original estates had been alienated; and in 1670, there is a grant under the great seal to Charles Maitland of Halton of the barony of Ullishaven, escheated to the king in consequence of John, earl of Dundee, dying without male issue.

The father of Archbishop Leighton was Dr. Alex ander Leighton, a presbyterian clergyman of unhappy celebrity. In the reign of Charles I., he was sen tenced by the Star-chamber, for a virulent attack upon episcopacy in a book entitled "Zion's Plea against Prelacy," to be whipt and pilloried, to have his ears cropt, his nose slit, and his cheeks branded. This barbarous punishment was rigorously inflicted; and to it were superadded, during a long imprisonment, such atrocious severities, as savoured more of vin dictive malignity than of judicial retribution. No apology would be valid, or even decent, for cruelties which were revolting alike to justice, to humanity, and to religion. That the wretched sufferer, however, was of a cross, untowardly disposition, may be conjectured from his having brought himself under the lash of the law, in the preceding reign, by stubbornly refusing to abandon the irregular practice of medicine. There

is a fact, moreover, not generally known, which may account for the excessive rigour with which his subsequent offences were visited. Not only was the book for which he was so severely handled outrageously scurrilous and inflammatory in its contents, but there were collateral circumstances attending its publication, that betokened a mischievous purpose in the writer. In the first edition no name is given either of printer or author; and instead of the date in the usual way, we find, "Printed the year and moneth wherein Rochell was lost." The frontispiece exhibits on one page a lamp burning, supported by a book, and guarded by two men with naked swords; which hieroglyphic is explained by the legend:

> Prevailing prelates strive to quench our light,
> Except your sacred power quash their might.

On the other page is the representation of an antique dilapidated tower. Out of its ruins grows an elder-bush, from the branches of which several bishops are falling, one of them holding in his hand a large box. This device is interpreted by the motto:

> The tottering prelats, with their trumpery, all
> Shall moulder down, like elder from a wall.

The place of Archbishop Leighton's birth has been much disputed. It is commonly believed that he was a native of London; on the strength I imagine of Burnet's assertion, that he was sent from thence to be educated in Scotland. This, however, is inferring too much: for he may have been carried up,

in his infancy, from Scotland to London, when his father settled in that city. Craig also claims him for her son: but this claim seems to rest solely on the fact of his direct or collateral ancestors having been considerable proprietors in that village; a foundation too weak to sustain the hypothesis, which a virtuous solicitude to make out their affinity with so eminent a person has induced the inhabitants to raise upon it. To my mind there are unanswerable reasons for assigning that distinction to Edinburgh. In the inscription on his tomb-stone, Leighton is said to have died in his 74th year; and deducting 73 from 1684, the undisputed year of his decease, we shall have 1611 for the year of his nativity. The same amount is obtained by deducting 30, the number of his years when he took orders, from 1641, which is the date of that transaction. Now, his father was at that time professor of moral philosophy in Edinburgh College *, and did not go up to London until two years afterwards †; and it is certainly to be presumed, not a shadow of evidence appearing to the contrary, that the son was born in the place wherein the father was then residing. He had one younger brother, of whom mention will be made hereafter, and two sisters; one of whom was

* Of this professorship I meet with the following notice in a work entitled "The Present State of Scotland," London, 1738. "It (the College) was founded in 1580, by King James VI., upon a petition from the city for that end, to grant them a charter, with the privilege of an university. But the foundation was not perfected till 1582. The persons established by the foundation were a principal or primare, four regents or masters of philosophy, &c." p. 62.

† See Chalmers' Biograph. Dict.

married to a Mr. Lightmaker, a gentleman of landed property in Sussex; and the other to a Mr. Rathband, as appears from a single allusion in one of her brother's letters.

Of his early years we have only a scanty though a valuable notice. It appears from the unquestionable authority of his sister, that, from his tenderest age, his singular teachableness and piety endeared him greatly to his parents; who used to speak with admiration of his extraordinary exemption from childish faults and follies.

At college his behaviour was so uniformly excellent as to attract the notice of his superiors; and one of them, in a letter to Dr. Leighton, congratulates him on having a son, in whom Providence has made him abundant compensation for his sufferings. There is still in existence a humorous poem on Dr. Aikenhead, Warden of the college, which Leighton wrote when an undergraduate. It evinces a goodnatured playfulness of fancy, but is not of a merit that calls for publication.

After taking his degree, Leighton passed several years in travelling, and in the studies proper to qualify him for future usefulness. It was his opinion, that great advantages are to be reaped from a residence in foreign parts; inasmuch as a large acquaintance with the sentiments of strangers, and with the civil and religious institutions, the manners and usages of other countries, conduces to unfetter the mind of indigenous prejudices, to abate the self-sufficiency of partial knowledge, and to pro-

duce a sober and charitable estimate of opinions that differ from our own. Many years afterwards, he recommended a similar course to his nephew, alleging, "that there is a very peculiar advantage in travel, not to be understood but by the trial of it; and that for himself he nowise repented the time he had spent in that way."

During his stay abroad, Leighton was often at Douay, where some of his relations had settled. In this seminary he appears to have met with some religionists, whose lives were framed on the strictest model of primitive piety. Though keenly alive to the faults of popery, he did not consider the Romish church to be utterly antichristian; but thought he discerned in it beautiful fragments of the original temple, however disfigured with barbarous additions, and almost hid beneath the rampant growth of a baneful superstition. Having learnt from these better portions of that corrupt establishment, that its constitutions were not altogether dross, he went on to discover that the frame of his own church was not entirely gold: nor did it escape him, that in the sweeping extermination, so clamorously demanded in Scotland, of all those offices of devotion which symbolized with the Roman Catholic services, some of the noblest formularies and most useful institutes of the primitive church would perish. It was probably from this time that his veneration for the presbyterian platform began to abate.

He was thirty years old before he took holy orders; and in deferring to so ripe an age his en-

trance on the ministry, as well as in retiring so early as he did from its more laborious province, he acted agreeably to his avowed opinion, that "some men preach too soon, and some too long." His judgment of what is most reverent towards God corresponded with those canons of the Levitical economy, which prescribe a mature age for engaging in the more arduous department of the sacerdotal office, and grant an honourable superannuation at that period of life, when the strength of mind and body commonly begins to decay. It was on the sixteenth day of December, A. D. 1641, that Leighton was ordained and admitted minister of Newbottle, in Midlothian, a parish in the presbytery of Dalkeith. No pains have been spared to retrieve traditional reminiscences of the manner in which this exemplary pastor discharged the duties of an office which he was so religiously fearful of undertaking. But research has been fruitless. No traces remain of his parochial ministrations, which doubtless fill an ample page in that book of Divine remembrance, from which no work of faith, no labour of love, is ever obliterated.

Of the general tenor, however, of his life, and ministerial occupations, we have a few invaluable notices in Burnet's History of his own Time. Engrossed with the care of his parish, he seldom mixed in the convocations of the presbyters, to whom indeed he was obnoxious, because he condemned their practice of descanting on the Covenant from the pulpit, and their stern determination to force that bitter morsel on conscientious objectors. It was his aim to win

converts to Jesus Christ, not proselytes to a party. And exemplary indeed must he have been, if that picture of a finished evangelist, which his intimate friend has produced in the beautiful Discourse of the Pastoral Care, was faithfully copied from the lively pattern exhibited by Leighton. Yet the blameless sanctity of his manners, his professional excellence, and his studious inoffensiveness, were not enough to content the zealots of his church. In a synod he was publicly reprimanded for not "preaching up the times." "Who," he asked, "does preach up the times?" It was answered that all the brethren did it. "Then," he rejoined, "if all of you preach up the times, you may surely allow one poor brother to preach up Christ Jesus and eternity."

Although Leighton was averse both by temper and principle from meddling with politics, yet there were certain conjunctures of perplexity and peril, in which he thought himself bound to set an example to his flock of intrepid loyalty. In the year 1648, he acceded to the Engagement for the King; a step which would have involved him in serious trouble with the republican government, but for the interposition of the Earl of Lothian, and the charm of his personal character. When the Engagement expired in the discomfiture of those enterprises to which it had given birth, he was placed in a very delicate predicament; in which, however, his behaviour was creditable not less to his political discretion, than to his Christian boldness and integrity. Called

upon in his official capacity to admonish some of his parishioners,—from whom there was a public profession of repentance for their concern in that very Engagement to which he had himself subscribed,—he directed their consciences to the many offences against morality and religion which they had committed in the course of their military service; and of these, without touching on the grounds of the expedition and the merits of their cause, he solemnly charged them to repent.

About this time, we find him in correspondence with several of the episcopal clergy, and especially with Bishop Burnet's father. His mind seems to have been led, by observing the faults under which the presbyterian discipline labours, to an attentive examination of the episcopal form, notwithstanding the antipathy to it which had been instilled into him with his mother's milk, and which must have been augmented by a pious resentment of his father's sufferings. Although Leighton never considered any particular mode of ecclesiastical polity a point of sufficient moment to justify schism, yet it is clear that from this time he regarded the episcopal model as adapted beyond any other to the edification of the church universal. Assuredly it was no prospect of secular preferment that helped him to shake off the prepossessions of his early years, for his worldly interest pointed another way. Besides, conversions to which unrighteous motives have conduced are usually characterized by extraordinary bitterness against the deserted party; whereas Leighton, after

becoming a moderate episcopalian, breathed nothing towards his former associates but good-will and kindness. He wholly sequestered himself, indeed, from their legislative conclaves, and at length relinquished his cure. But he took this last step, not from any scruple about continuing to officiate in a church of Calvinistic construction, but from hearty repugnance to that system of spiritual despotism, which had been linked by violent and ambitious men with the presbyterian cause.

It must have been in the latter part of his residence at Newbottle that a calamity befel him, which gave occasion to a striking manifestation of his indifference to money, of his large-heartedness and piety. At his father's death, he came into possession of about a thousand pounds, which constituted his whole property. This sum he placed, or allowed to remain, in the hands of a merchant without adequate security, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Mr. Lightmaker, his brother-in-law, who urged him to come up to London and invest it more safely. Leighton's reply to this good counsel is highly characteristic :—

Sir,

I thank you for your letter. That you give me notice of I desire to consider as becomes a Christian, and to prepare to wait for my own removal. What business follows upon my father's may be well enough done without me, as I have writ more at large to Mr. E——, and desired him to show you the letter when you meet. Any pittance belonging to me may possibly be useful and needful for my subsistence; but truly, if something else draw me not, I shall never bestow

so long a journey on that I account so mean a business. Remember my love to my sister your wife, and to my brother and sister Rathband, as you have opportunity. I am glad to hear of the welfare of you all, and above all things wish for myself and you all our daily increase in likeness to Jesus Christ, and growing heavenwards, where he is who is our treasure. To his grace I recommend you.

Sir,

Your affectionate brother,

December 31, 1649. R. Leighton.

Before long the event anticipated by Mr. Lightmaker took place. The merchant failed, and Leighton's patrimony was irretrievably lost. How he took this misfortune may be gathered from the following letter to his brother-in-law :—

Sir,

Your kind advice I cannot but thank you for, but I am not easily taught that lesson. I confess it is the wiser way to trust nobody; but there is so much of the fool in my nature as carries me rather to the other extreme, to trust every body. Yet I will endeavour to take the best courses I can in that little business you write of. It is true there is a lawful, yea a needful, diligence in such things: but, alas! how poor are they to the portion of believers, where our treasure is.

That little that was in Mr. E.'s hands hath failed me; but I shall either have no need of it, or be supplied some other way. And this is the relief of my rolling thoughts, that while I am writing this, this moment is passing away, and all the hazards of want and sickness shall be at an end. My mother writes to me, and presses my coming up. I know not yet if that can be; but I intend, God willing, so soon as I can conveniently, if I come not, to take some course that things be done as if I were there. I hope you will have patience in the

mean time. Remember my love to my sisters. The Lord be with you, and lead you in his ways.

Your loving Brother,

Newbottle, R. LEIGHTON.
Feb. 4th, 1650.

Being in England some time afterwards, his recent loss was touched upon by Mr. Lightmaker, who regretted that he had so sadly misplaced his confidence. "Oh! no more of that," cried Leighton; "the good man has escaped from the care and vexation of that business." "What, is that all you make of the matter?" rejoined his brother-in-law with surprise. "Truly," answered the other, "if the Duke of Newcastle, after losing nineteen times as much of yearly income, can dance and sing, while the solid hopes of Christianity will not avail to support us, we had better be as the world."

Somewhere about this time,—for the date cannot be assigned with certainty,—an event occurred which drew forth a proof of his admirable self-possession in the sudden prospect of death. He had taken the water at the Savoy stairs, in company with his brother Sir Ellis, the knight's lady, and some others, and was on his way to Lambeth, when, owing to some mismanagement, the boat was in imminent danger of sinking. While the rest of the party were pale with terror, and most of them crying out, Leighton never for a moment lost his accustomed serenity. To some, who afterwards expressed their astonishment at his calmness, he replied:—"Why, what harm would it have been, if we had all been safe landed on the other side?" In

the habit of dying daily, and of daily conversing with the world of spirits, he could never be surprised or disconcerted by a summons to depart out of the body.

Another anecdote of him, which bears witness to his devout equanimity on perilous occasions, belongs to this period of his history. During the civil wars, when the royalist army was lying in Scotland, Leighton was anxious to visit his brother who bore arms in the king's service, before an engagement, which was daily expected, should take place. On his way to the camp he was benighted in the midst of a vast thicket; and, having deviated from the path, he sought in vain for an outlet. Almost spent with fatigue and hunger, he began to think his situation desperate, and dismounting, spread his cloak upon the ground, and knelt down to pray. With implicit devotion he resigned his soul to God; entreating, however, that if it were not the divine pleasure for him then to conclude his days, some way of deliverance might be opened. Then remounting his horse, he threw the reins upon its neck; and the animal left to itself, or rather to the conduct of Almighty Providence, made straight into the high road, threading all the mazes of the wood with unerring certainty.

In the year 1652, after eleven years of close residence on his cure, Leighton tendered his resignation to the presbytery. At first it was declined, but in the year following they were induced to accept it; and on February 3, 1653, his ministerial connexion with

Newbottle was dissolved. Shortly after this affair, he was chosen Primar or Principal of the University of Edinburgh, a situation which he was the rather prevailed upon to accept, because it was totally unconnected with the church as a body politic. It was hardly possible that at such a period of civil dissension his election should be unanimous; but, although it was not cordially approved by all parties, such was the homage paid to his superlative merit, that it encountered no direct opposition. It appears that, upon the death of Principal Adamson, in 1652, Mr. William Colville, at that time minister of the English church at Utrecht, was elected. But in consequence of "some obstructions," (as the phrase runs in the Council Register of Edinburgh,) the nature of which is not explained, the election was set aside on the 17th of January, 1653, one year's stipend being allowed to the deposed warden, to compensate his trouble and expense in coming over from Holland. As this gentleman was known for his monarchical principles, it is probable that the obstructions hinted at proceeded from Oliver Cromwell; for it is certain that, about this time, the principals of King's College, Aberdeen, of Glasgow, and of St. Andrew's, paid the forfeit of their stubborn loyalty with their academical places. The very same day on which the office was declared vacant, Leighton was chosen to it. The ministers of the city, who were partial to Colville, a man of real worth and talent, assisted at the election of his successor in obedience to the charter, but refused to con-

cur in it; at the same time expressing a wish that their attendance could have been dispensed with, since they were "content with the man, though not clear in the manner of the call*."

In this situation he was eminently useful. One of his earliest measures was to revive the obsolete practice of delivering, once in the week, a Latin lecture on some theological subject. These prelections, which are fortunately preserved, attracted such general admiration, that the public hall in which he pronounced them used to be thronged with auditors, who were enchanted with the purity of his style and his animated delivery. To the students under his care he was indefatigably attentive, instructing them singly as well as collectively; and to many youths of capacity and distinction his wise and affectionate exhortations were lastingly beneficial.

Of his proceedings, while he held this academical post, some particulars are extant, which bespeak him gifted with talents for active business. Two years after his appointment, he was deputed by the Provost and Council, to apply to the Protector in London for an augmentation of the revenues of the College. A minute of the Town Council Register indicates that his mission was successful.

The year following, he called the attention of the magistrates to a report of some suspicious houses having been detected in the neighbourhood of the

* See Bower's Hist. of the Univ. of Edin., vol. i. pp. 261, 263, &c.

college; and effectual measures were set on foot, at his instigation, for extirpating the nuisance.

Neither was he regardless of those subordinate establishments, to which, as they were not comprehended within the immediate circle of his duties, a Principal of austerer dignity, or of inferior zeal, might not have condescended. Observing that the collegians made little way in the higher branches of science and literature, he searched into the cause of their deficiency, and quickly found it in the want of a sound rudimental education. In order to remedy this evil he proposed that grammar schools should be founded in the several presbyteries, and suitably endowed; and he advised that Cromwell should be solicited to assign the funds requisite for this purpose, "out of the concealed revenues of the Kirk rents." He further recommended that some elementary grammar, part English and part Latin, should be compiled for the use of these seminaries; and in order to take immediate advantage of the Protector's bounty, should he graciously accede to their petition, he moved that instructions be issued forthwith to magistrates, ministers, and masters of families, enjoining them to set about obtaining a "Locality" for the proposed establishments.

In the same year he offered to preach in the college hall to the scholars, once on the sabbath of every third or fourth week, taking turns with the professors; an offer which appears to have been accepted by the Town Council.

Bound up with the book entitled Naphtali, is a

letter from James Mitchell, the stern fanatic who suffered for his attempt on the life of Archbishop Sharp. In this letter he vindicates himself for the part he took in the Pentland insurrection, on the ground of his having been required, at college, to subscribe the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant, which were tendered to him along with the other candidates for Laureation, A. D. 1656, by the Principal Leighton*. There seems no reason to question the veracity of this statement. It was quite consistent with Leighton's principles to submit to existing authorities; and to consider this or the other form of government, whether in church or state, a point of vastly inferior importance to concord and quietness. Against the matter of the covenants he seems not to have entertained, at that time, any strong objection; but only to their being made engines of tyrannizing over men's consciences and oppressing their persons. Assuredly he would not have originated the order for withholding degrees from the Scholars till they professed their allegiance to the dominant system. Still it would argue a keen censoriousness, to blame him for proposing to the students, in his official capacity, a test of their attachment to the existing order of things; it being certain, moreover, that the majority would accept it cordially, and the pain of declining it being only the suspension of an academical degree.

Leighton retained the situation of principal in the

* See Naphtali, 1761, p. 373; and Wodrow MSS.

University of Edinburgh till the year 1662, when a very unexpected call obliged him to resign it; and his successor was the same Mr. Colville, into whose chair he had been preferred, when that gentleman's election was superseded by Cromwell, as related above.

The course of our history has brought us to an epoch, which may be reckoned the most important of Leighton's life;—the epoch of his inauguration to the episcopal office in Scotland. It was not to be expected, that the son of a noted confessor in the cause of ecclesiastical parity would be allowed to transfer his allegiance to prelacy without incurring censures of the sharpest edge. In the spring-tide of civil and religious bigotry, such a deed was sure to undergo the most unfavourable construction; for even in the present day, when every grudge has died away between the two national churches, there are few Scottish writers but regard this transaction as a sable spot on the character of Leighton, which it were an extravagant charity to impute solely to a misleading judgment. Being myself satisfied, after attentive examination, both of the soundness of his judgment and of his probity on this occasion, I shall hope to be excused, if I attempt to set his conduct in its true light, by prefacing the particulars of his elevation to the bench, with a succinct account of the religious condition of Scotland at that period.

Charles the Second, when first he recovered the throne of his fathers, was welcomed with every demonstration of delight. To the eyes of an excited

multitude his return was that of a tutelary deity, whose exil had shed a blight upon their wealth and happiness, and with whose presence their civil and religious prosperity was identified. Throughout the country this event was celebrated with intemperate festivities. The whole nation was in a frenzy of joy; and seemed anxious to indemnify itself for the restraints which puritanical austerity had imposed, by giving the loose rein to indulgences that were but too congenial with the young King's disposition, and that fostered in him those licentious habits which have consigned his reign to the most ignominious page of English history. It is remarkable that Scotland shared largely, as Kirkton pathetically owns, in the popular intoxication. A covenanted prince established on the throne of the British Islands was a sight to unhinge the habitual sobriety of the rigid presbyterians; and the few who escaped the extensive contagion sought lonely places and wept, declaring that this "mirth ran in too carnal a strain," to betoken any good to the cause in which it originated.

The state of the English church at this juncture is so generally known, that to describe it would be superfluous. By the iron hand of Cromwell episcopacy had been displaced to make way for the congregational discipline, which was brought in over the heads of the outwitted and indignant presbyterians. But the temper of the English nation was ill-suited to this ecclesiastical constitution, which was generally borne with impatience,

and melted away, like a snow-wreath, the instant it felt the touch of reviving monarchy. Little time was lost in removing the intrusive ministers from the benefices, colleges, and other preferments, of which they had possessed themselves; nor did any material disturbance result from the discontent of the ejected party. In the facility with which the re-establishment of episcopacy was effected there was nothing to surprise a considerate observer. The Cranmers, the Ridleys, the Latimers, the Hoopers, the Jewels, these mitred confessors and martyrs, who had borne the brunt of that dreadful contest in which this nation burst the chains of a debasing superstition, were canonized in every English bosom: whereas, of the advantages peculiar to the presbyterian economy the experience had been short and unsatisfactory. Hence no movement could be easier in England than a recurrence to the episcopal constitution.

But far other were the predilections of our northern brethren. However just the claim of episcopacy may be to the filial reverence of the Church of Scotland, it is nevertheless notorious that, at the dawn of the Reformation, the dignitaries of that church opposed the strong current of popular feeling and opinion; and by cruelties not less impolitic than wicked exasperated to the utmost a nation always sternly tenacious of its sentiments, and of its resentments of real or supposed injuries. The reformation of Scotland originated with teachers of the Lutheran persuasion, by whom neither a liturgical service, nor a

graduated scale of ecclesiastical authorities, was accounted a popish abomination. But some of Calvin's disciples, to whom it fell to complete the excellent work, not content with introducing their master's doctrinal code, as the only true interpretation of the gospel, coupled with it his plan of church polity, as hardly inferior in sanctity and importance to his theological system itself. None but a novice in human nature will be indignant at the early reformers, for carrying to an undue extent their abhorrence of whatever seemed to savour of popery. Yet assuredly that abhorrence was excessive. Those especially of the Genevese church appear to have estimated their proximity to the faultless institutes of Jesus Christ and his apostles, by their remoteness from whatever obtained in Rome, whether of doctrine or discipline; and this sentiment, not feeble in its influence on the minds of the educated teachers, became fierce, outrageous, and untractable through its union with animal passions, when transfused into the breasts of the uncivilized multitude.

To Knox, and to his fellow-helpers in cleansing the Scottish temple, the homage of reformed Christendom is due. Chieftains were they among heroes,

> Giants of mighty bone and bold emprise,

who achieved what men of the plebeian standard would not have dared even to contemplate; and whose successes in a warfare of extraordinary difficulty have raised an imperishable monument to their rare endowments, their sleepless zeal, their intrepid

boldness, their uncompromising honesty, their sublime devotion. Yet it cannot be disguised, that nothing graceful appears in their robust and sinewy proportions. They were rough artificers, and they worked with rough tools; preferring a rapid execution of their projects by main force to the tardier results of address and dexterity. Much might be urged to extenuate, and even to justify, the violence of their proceedings. It is not, however, my present business to calculate the merits, or to palliate the errors, of the great Scotch reformers; a task which has been ably executed by Dr. M'Crie, in his interesting Life of John Knox. But I have thought it expedient just to glance at the subject, in order that the reader, when carried into scenes in which the jealous attachment of Scotchmen to presbyterianism breaks out, may have his mind constantly awake to the fact, that it was under the presbyterian banner that protestantism triumphed in their land. To this it was owing that, in vulgar estimation, the pure faith of the gospel was so incorporated with the calvinistic form of church-government, as to be unable to survive a separation. A shrine, framed exactly on that pattern, was deemed indispensable for obtaining the inhabitation of the Deity. Accordingly, when James I. endeavoured, towards the close of the sixteenth century, to impose on Scotland a dilute and modified episcopacy, his enterprise, though conducted as stealthily as possible and with characteristic craft, was met by a resistance under which it soon expired. With the disastrous attempts

of his son to assimilate the Kirk to its sister Church, by reviving prelacy and introducing a liturgy, every reader of English history is familiar. It were to be wished that the second Charles had learnt, from these miscarriages, the fatal folly of violently meddling with national prejudices, and of making such headlong inroads into the sanctuary of the conscience, as men of honour and principle will resist at every hazard. So it was, however, that one of the earliest measures of his flagitious reign, was an attempt to force back on his good people of Scotland that ecclesiastical discipline, which they had so recently and loathingly repudiated.

To this attempt, which would have been imprudent in any monarch, and in Charles was utterly base and unprincipled, we may notice some strong inducements. Foremost among these may be placed the strong dislike which that prince had conceived to the covenanters. He had indeed been sharply schooled by them when struggling for the throne; and he was perfectly aware that, in promoting his restoration, they had not been actuated by attachment to his person, but solely by the hope that a monarch who should owe to their sword the recovery of his crown would prove a pillar of the Kirk, a corner-stone of the presbyterian temple. Charles, however, whose memory had a rare facility of shaking off claims upon his gratitude, forgot the services of the party which had lavished its blood in his behalf, but remembered the humiliations by which those services had been purchased. Nor can it be doubted that he designed in this enterprise to lay the basis of a

tyrannical throne;—an hereditary propensity, which was doubtless augmented by the tremendous blow that had recently alighted on his family from the popular arm of the British constitution, and to which a new edge may have been given by the display he had witnessed in the French court of the manifold attractions of an irresponsible despotism. He conceived, moreover, that through episcopacy a door might be opened, in process of time, for the admission of popery, which system of religion he adopted, apparently on no better ground than its singular aptitude for promoting his arbitrary designs. Nor were mercenary intriguers wanting, to urge him forward by depicting Scotland with her arms already open to embrace an hierarchical establishment; and when these representations were enforced by his ablest ministers, he could no longer resist so strong a combination of incentives to an experiment, the success of which would infinitely gratify his corrupt ambition.

For achieving this project, it was obviously expedient to set about it before presbyterianism had recovered from the shock it had received during Cromwell's usurpation, and while the nation was still glowing with bridal enthusiasm at the union with its desired sovereign. Whether it would have been practicable, as some have imagined, by taking advantage of the jealousy which the Presbyterians harboured of the Independents, to insinuate by furtive gradations a moderate form of episcopacy, it is not our present business to debate. But had the scheme been ever so wise and excellent, it could hardly have been brought

to a fortunate issue by the agents to whose conduct it was intrusted. To have given it any fair chance of success, there should have been employed upon it men of experience, abilities and virtue; men equally wary and resolute, delicate in managing national prejudices, and strong to arrest, or skilful to turn, the stream of epidemical passions; men of popular talent and conciliatory address, and whose moral and religious character would stamp some credit on proceedings, which, how fairly soever adorned, must still carry an ungracious aspect.

But, instead of such a choice being made, the royal commission was given to Middleton, a man of base origin and baser manners, obstinate, choleric, licentious, and cruel. His coadjutor was Dr. James Sharp, whose memory is still execrated by the Presbyterian church, and whose virtues were not sufficiently imposing, even in the eyes of his own party, for his tragical end to secure him the reputation of a martyr. By his enemies he is branded with every atrocious epithet which malevolence can coin or utter; his political offences are aggravated; his personal character is blackened. That religious bigotry has mangled his corse will be clear to any one who shall calmly separate authentic facts from baseless and improbable allegations. The readers of Wodrow and Kirkton ought to receive their charges against Sharp with no common jealousy, as those historians themselves are far from weighing him in an even balance. Bishop Burnet, whose delineations are occasionally tinctured with private dislikes,

has left a very ill-favoured portrait of his moral character, describing him as quite devoid of serious religion, an artful sycophant whose integrity readily truckled to his worldly interests. On the other hand, some favourable representations of him have appeared. It has been averred, that he is cruelly traduced in the heavy charge of having betrayed his trust, since he had ceased, before he was made a bishop, to hold any commission from the presbyterian body, and was agent at that time for only one part of the ministers, with whom he had a perfect understanding. Of his bountifulness also such proofs have been adduced as it would be uncandid to disallow. The truth probably is, that Sharp was honest, so long as his honesty was unassailed by considerable temptations; but he was not proof against the fascination of a mitre. Having neither firmness of principle, nor tenderness of conscience, nor delicacy of honour, he might easily persuade himself that, since no opposition on his part could check the refluent tide of episcopacy, to rise with it to the summit of wealth and dignity would be no illaudable wisdom. For the great affairs intrusted to him by the English government he wanted compass of mind and amenity of temper; and he was still more disqualified for conducting them successfully, by the utter disrepute into which he had fallen with his countrymen. But he was an industrious man, of some versatility of talent and dexterity in business; and these useful qualities, combined with those prime requisites for currying favour with an unprincipled court, a supple conscience, a patient obsequiousness,

and a wheedling tongue, attracted the royal notice, and merited for him the primacy of Scotland.

Matters being thus far advanced towards restoring the episcopal regimen, the next business was to find persons qualified for its highest stations. Sydserf, formerly Bishop of Galloway, was the only survivor of that order of dignitaries in Scotland. He was now appointed to Orkney, the least laborious see, and therefore the best adapted to a man almost past his work, but who could not, without a slur on his character, be omitted in the roll of new bishops. After Sharp had secured the primacy by worming himself into the good graces of Lord Clarendon, the appointments to the inferior sees were given very much into his hands. We have Burnet's assertion, and it is corroborated by authenticated facts, that his choice was generally very bad. Yet in company with the names of Fairfowl, Hamilton, and Alexander Burnet, we find the venerable name of Robert Leighton :—

> —— quale per artem
> Inclusum buxo, aut Oriciâ terebintho,
> Lucet ebur.

The credit, however, of this nomination is denied to Sharp; and it does seem impossible that he should have approved it, unless he were ignorant, which he hardly could be, of Leighton's character.

The following are the circumstances which led to the exaltation of this extraordinary man to a sphere of stormy greatness, wherein his apostolic virtues gilded

the gloom, which it exceeded even their influence to dispel.

During the academical vacations, Leighton was in the habit of making excursions into England, or across the seas, partly for the benefit of his health, and partly with a view of gaining a clear insight into the state of religious parties and opinions. He was passing homeward through London, after a visit to Bath, when he was first mentioned to the King as a desirable person to include among the new bishops. The recommendation came from Lord Aubigny, a nobleman high in favour at court, as well on account of his being a papist and privy to Charles's apostasy, as because his libertine principles were congenial with those of his graceless sovereign. With this powerful courtier Sir Ellis Leighton, secretary to the Duke of York, was on terms of intimacy; and having himself turned papist for mercenary purposes, he now desired, from no higher motives, the advancement of his brother to episcopal dignity. He was a man of talent, specious and aspiring; and he pretended to a piety which his dissolute life belied. Imagining that a mitre in his family would augment his personal consequence, and thus conduce to his further aggrandizement, he was at pains to possess the mind of Lord Aubigny with a high conceit of the advantages that would result from appointing a man like Robert Leighton to nurse the critical infancy of the episcopal church. Charles, who never wanted acuteness, was not hard to be persuaded, that, in order to soothe the covenanters and accredit the meditated innovation, it would be highly politic to

invest with the lawn a divine of such acknowledged merit, so accomplished in learning, and so beloved for his mild and saintly virtues. This would indeed be to introduce prelacy in a garb the most amiable and specious. Believing also, as deeply depraved minds believe to their own curse, that every man's conscience accommodates itself to his interests, he never doubted but that Leighton might be wrought upon by his brother to acquiesce in episcopacy being made a stalkinghorse to cover the approaches of popery.

On this he probably counted with the greater assurance, in consequence of a current report that Leighton was not unfriendly to some parts of the pontifical constitutions; a report which seems to have taken its rise from his paying occasional visits to the college at Douay, and to have been countenanced by his celibacy, his ascetic habit, and an admiration for some of the disciples of Jansenius, which he was too highminded and ingenuous to dissemble. It was indeed more than insinuated, that he was too liberally affected towards the catholics for a staunch and thorough protestant; and the commendations he bestowed in his public lectures on the works of Thomas à Kempis did not escape severe animadversions. To attempt a serious confutation of this slander would be to grapple with a shadow. Leighton's writings abound with brief but decisive refutations of those Roman Catholic tenets, which it was the essence of the Reformation to abjure; and their whole spirit and tenor are diametrically opposite to the self-righteous formalities and unscriptural impositions, which are interwoven with the very sub-

stance of that adulterous system. So long as the current of passion bore down, with undistinguishing fury, upon whatever was suspected, whether in doctrine or practice, of being allied to papistry, it was worthy of his benignant and liberal spirit to do what he could towards dispelling prejudices, by which the mind was prevented from seeing clearly to weed out the faults, without sacrificing the excellencies, of the Catholic ritual. But when he saw that a contrary and more dangerous current had set in from the English court, and that nothing less was designed than to restore to the Vatican its ascendency, he exposed the deformity of the church of Rome in such unsparing terms, as nothing but a deep apprehension of the impending evil could have extorted from a man of his forbearance and charity.

Leighton was very averse from his own promotion; and in his nephew's account I find him stating, that his reluctance to acquiesce in it was overcome only by a peremptory order of the Court, requiring him to accept it, unless he thought in his conscience that the episcopal office was unlawful. Unable to screen himself behind this opinion, he complied at length with the royal instances, that he might not be chargeable with contumacy towards the King, nor incur the heavier guilt of recoiling from a service, to which a far greater Potentate seemed to call him.

Perhaps this transaction, which has been thought to cast a shade on his constancy and disinterestedness, may appear to the candid and intelligent reasoner, when it is thoroughly sifted, to exhibit those qualities with singular lustre. Taking in the whole system of

his life before and after his consecration, we see him an example of modesty, gravity, and habitual recollectedness of spirit; a despiser of riches, and honours, and selfish indulgences; an exile in heart from this world of sensible objects; one whose prime delight it was to dwell in solitary converse with his God, and with the things that are invisible and eternal. To suppose that a man of this temper and these habits was carried out of himself by such a flush of ambition and vanity, as precluded any due consideration of the manner in which his credit, his conscience, and his happiness would be affected by his elevation, is to suppose a phenomenon that could not be made credible without evidence which in this case is totally wanting. Covetousness could never be laid to his charge without a contempt of historical testimony too indecent for his keenest enemies to venture on. When, moreover, the soundness of his understanding, and the rigour with which he used to canvass his own conduct and motives, are taken into the account, some presumption that he acted rightly under all the circumstances of the case, in taking this perilous step, must be admitted to arise from his never repenting of it; neither when he was laboriously sowing in tears, nor when, at the sad conclusion of his episcopal labours, he reaped a plentiful harvest of obloquy, disappointment, and sorrow. Not long after his advancement, when some of his former friends upbraided him with his dereliction of his father's principles, contumeliously terming it apostasy, he calmly answered that no man was bound to be of his father's opinions; and whenever he was challenged to vindicate the obnoxious

step he had taken, he manifested a frankness and good humour which could not have cohabited with an offended conscience.

What then remains but to believe that this transaction was in strict accordance with his magnanimous character; that it was an act of self-immolation on the altar of christian love; a deliberate surrender of his constant inclinations, and of present ease and quiet, to the exigencies of the Church, for whose sake he accounted no affliction too severe, no service too laborious, no sacrifice too costly? Fortunately there is a letter preserved, written at the time he was in suspense about accepting a bishopric, in which he discloses with touching ingenuity and pathos the workings of his holy soul. I here insert it as a document of great interest, throwing light on this part of our history, and beautifully illustrating the conflict of his mind, before it was subdued to this great effort of duty.

The letter is to the Rev. Mr. James Aird, Minister at Torry.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have received from you the kindest letter that ever you writ me; and that you may know I take it so, I return you the free and friendly advice, never to judge any man before you hear him, nor any business by one side of it. Were you here to see the other, I am confident your thoughts and mine would be the same. You have both too much knowledge of me, and too much charity to think, that either such little contemptible scraps of honour or riches sought in that part of the world, with so much reproach, or any human complacency in

the world, will be admitted to decide so grave a question, or that I would sell (to speak no higher) the very sensual pleasure of my retirement for a rattle, far less deliberately do any thing that I judge offends God. For the offence of good people in cases indifferent in themselves, but not accounted so by them, whatsoever you do or do not, you shall offend some good people on the one side or other: and for those with you, the great fallacy in this business is, that they have misreckoned themselves in taking my silence and their zeals to have been consent and participation; which, how great a mistake it is, few know better or so well as yourself. And the truth is, I did see approaching an inevitable necessity to strain with them in divers practices, in what station soever remaining in Britain; and to have escaped further off (which hath been in my thoughts) would have been the greatest scandal of all. And what will you say if there be in this thing somewhat of that you mention, and would allow of reconciling the devout on different sides, and of enlarging those good souls you meet with from their little fetters, though possibly with little success? Yet the design is commendable, pardonable at least. However, one comfort I have, that in what is pressed on me there is the least of my own choice, yea, on the contrary, the strongest aversion that ever I had to any thing in all my life: the difficulty in short lies in a necessity of either owning a scruple which I have not, or the rudest disobedience to authority that may be. The truth is, I am yet importuning and struggling for a liberation, and look upward for it: but whatsoever be the issue, I look beyond it, and this weary, weary wretched life, through which the hand I have resigned to I trust will lead me in the path of his own choosing; and so I may please him I am satisfied. I hope, if ever we meet, you shall find me, in the love of solitude and a devout life,

Your unalter'd Brother and Friend,

R. L.

When I set pen to paper, I intended not to exceed half a dozen lines, but slid on insensibly thus far; but though I should fill the paper on all sides, still the right view of this business would be necessarily suspended till meeting. Meanwhile hope well of me, and pray for me. This word I will add, that as there has been nothing of my choice in the thing, so I undergo it, if it must be, as a mortification, and that greater than a cell and haircloth: and whether any will believe this or no I am not careful.

It is surely no discredit to his sagacity that he once conceived a hope, to which he alludes in his letter, of bringing the episcopalians and presbyterians to coalesce on the basis of reciprocal concession. That hope will not be accounted the less rational for being feeble; but in proportion to its feebleness, if it were not altogether visionary, does the value rise of the sacrifices he made to realise it; for the dignity of its object none will dispute. Had it been possible for human virtue to prevent the bloody discord, which shortly overcast the spiritual firmament, and rent the Scottish church like an earthquake, Leighton could not have failed. To a temper in which Burnet never but once saw a ruffle, during a close familiarity of twenty-two years' standing, and under every variety of provocation, and to an address in dealing with perverse and factious spirits, which his adversaries admit while disparaging it with unhandsome epithets, he joined such extreme moderation of sentiment on the points at issue between the two churches, as peculiarly fitted him to stand in the gap, the angel of reconciliation and concord. It is true, indeed, that success has rarely

followed attempts to restore compactness to a religious body, after once it has been violently divided. For the most part the cure of religious dissensions is unhopeful, in proportion as the ground of them is trivial: because the difficulty of allaying the passions of men corresponds with the degree in which those passions are wedded to creatures of the imagination. As the contest goes on, the objects of contention gain importance in the eyes of the combatants; and minute differences expand into gulphs which separate salvation from perdition, the rather perhaps for the conscience being honest where the mind is not adequately enlightened. No violent measures, no summary process, can effect a cordial union of bodies of men disunited in matters of conscience. Yet, let time be allowed for factions to disband and irritations to abate; let proper measures be pursued for preventing untoward collisions, and for bringing those who are jealous of each other into contact at points, in which a mutual attraction will be exerted; and it may happen that, uniting in affection one to another, they will at length agree in sentiment also; or, at least, their speculative differences will cease to create baneful and scandalous schisms.

Leighton doubtless hoped that, by a mild and gracious exercise of his episcopal jurisdiction, he should propitiate most of the covenanters, whose hostility to moderate episcopacy he might suppose to be relenting, from the avowed desire for it of the synod of Aberdeen, and from the apparent conformity of two-thirds of the ministers. The re-establishment of the ancient

monarchy, an event so grateful to patriots of both persuasions, he considered a favourable crisis for "causing contentions to cease," and for drowning private grudges and public feuds in an ocean of christian love and universal prosperity. He might hope, moreover, that by his personal influence with the king, to whom his brother's situation at court would facilitate his access, he should be able to keep in check the violent partisans of prelacy, and to curb that headlong precipitance of innovation, of which some portentous symptoms had already appeared in the royal councils. In the latter objects he did not entirely fail: for he effectually shielded from molestation the nonconformists in his own diocese; and more than once, as we shall see hereafter, he converted the king to moderate measures, by his bold and faithful representations. His attempts to soften the prejudices of his own countrymen, and to effect a conjunction of the two churches did, it is true, miscarry. But it will appear, in the sequel of this history, that the failure does not lie with the Bishop, who exhibited throughout that arduous transaction an illustrious specimen of christian diplomacy, and whose character came forth from it as pure gold seven times tried in the furnace.

There is one particular in Leighton's conduct in this perplexing business, which is open to animadversion. I allude to his receiving the orders, first of deacon and then of priest, from the English bishops, previously to his consecration. Sheldon, bishop of London, insisted on Sharp and Leighton being re-ordained, on

the plea that their presbyterian ordination was void from the beginning, it having been conferred by a church actually in a state of schism, which vitiated all its acts of administration. Leighton denied the soundness of this objection to the validity of his ministry. Yet being little scrupulous, too little indeed, about the circumstantials of ecclesiastical polity, he yielded to Sheldon's demand with a readiness, which the repugnance evinced to it by Sharp made the more observable. The view he took of the ceremony imposed upon them was, that the "re-ordaining a priest ordained in another church imported no more, but that they received him into orders according to their own rules; and did not infer the annulling the orders he had formerly received." Had the English bishops concurred in this view of the subject, Leighton would have stood on solid ground in submitting to a new ordination. But it was their avowed meaning to bestow that upon him, of which in their judgment he was hitherto destitute,—a regular consecration to the ministry of the gospel; and in this meaning Leighton did apparently acquiesce. His private construction of the ceremony to which he submitted could not change its public aspect and character. It seemed to be levelled at the foundations of presbyterianism, by impeaching the legitimacy of all presbyterian ministers who had received holy orders after episcopacy was legally resettled in Scotland by King James; and it exasperated not only the clergy who were in that predicament, but many of the laity also, in whose judgment the honour and interests of their

church had been compromised by Leighton's concession.

It is the duty of a faithful historian to avow, that Leighton did not, in this instance, sufficiently consider the ill impression his compliance would produce on mankind, and how much it might weaken his influence by depressing him in public estimation to the level of mere worldly calculators. Yet assuredly the real spring of his conduct in this affair was a high-toned spirituality, which led him to overlook the importance attached by vulgar opinion to the outside frame and fashion of religion. For on any point which seemed to touch the substance of christian piety he was exquisitely sensible. Hence his disgust at the feasting and jollity with which the consecration of the new bishops was celebrated. It grieved this excellent man to see any thing of sensual levity mixed up with the solemn business to which they were set apart; and the absence of that seriousness and spirit of prayer, which were especially called for by such an undertaking as remodelling a church, filled his mind with sad presentiments. These were increased, when he found Archbishop Sharp unprepared with any plan for healing the wounds of the church, for expelling its evil humours, for rectifying its disorders, and for kindling in it a livelier flame of true piety. On these great objects Leighton was anxious to begin without delay; and already he had conceived a scheme for the union of parties in Scotland, and for reforming the public services of religion, and reducing them to a method more adapted to general edification.

But in these christian projects he found no auxiliaries. With Sharp the establishment of an hierarchy, with himself at the head, appears to have been the ultimate object; and he was neither able to understand the spirit, nor disposed to forward the views of Leighton, of whose influence with Lauderdale he had begun to conceive a jealousy, and to whose pious disinterestedness the worldliness of his colleagues stood in disgraceful contrast. Leighton's sad forebodings were not a little confirmed by a close observation of Sharp's real character, and by the clearer development that was daily taking place of the principles which actuated the episcopalian leaders. In the supercilious recklessness of the infant hierarchy he descried the sure omen of its downfal; and he remarked to Burnet that, "in the whole progress of that affair, there appeared such cross characters of an angry Providence, that how fully soever he was satisfied in his own mind as to episcopacy itself, yet it seemed that God was against them, and that they were not like to be the men that should build up his church; so that the struggling about it seemed to him like a fighting against God."

On the twelfth of December, 1661, four of the persons designated to the episcopal government of Scotland received consecration in London; Leighton being appointed, at his own request, to the inconsiderable see of Dunblane, in Perthshire. Early in the following year, the new bishops proceeded in one coach to Edinburgh. Between Leighton and his colleagues, however, there was such a want of sympathy, as made it very

irksome to him to journey in their company; and having learnt that it was their intention to make a grand entry into Edinburgh, he quitted them at Morpeth, and arrived some days before the rest of the party. Burnet describes himself to have been a downcast spectator of the pomp and parade with which the other three bishops were escorted into the Scottish metropolis: and the spirit of wise and pious men was abashed, when they contrasted this ostentatious pageantry with the example of that true Bishop of souls, who made his last solemn entrance into Jerusalem, riding upon an ass and weeping, as if unable to endure the splendour of a triumph which prophecy forbade him to decline, unless it were shaded with a cloud of humility and sadness.

The first measures taken by Sharp and his coadjutors, if the pliable agents of his cupidity deserve to be so named, bore fatal marks of that perverse genius by which they were conceived. Instead of endeavouring to subdue the angry spirit of presbyterianism by firm but gentle management, he proceeded to lay on at once the whole weight of episcopal domination. In pursuance of this policy it was enacted, even before the Bishops left London, that presbyteries and judicatories should be abolished. This intemperate decree was followed up by an act, asserting the King's ecclesiastical supremacy, reinstating the bishops in their parliamentary privileges and civil dignities, and conferring on them an exclusive presidency in church meetings, the power of ordination and censure, with whatever else appertains to the administration and

jurisdiction of the church. It was added indeed that in the exercise of their functions they were to advise with certain loyal and prudent clergymen. Yet, as their assessors were to be selected by themselves, and were not empowered collectively to enforce an opinion contrary to their diocesan's, it is clear that any check they could maintain on the despotism of the bench would be of small account. All real authority was lodged with the bishop; and his clerical advisers were mere ciphers, to whom was allotted the unenviable privilege of sharing with their superior the odium of arbitrary procedings, which they had no power either to prevent or to modify.

Such was the present scheme of episcopacy, widely different from that of the year 1612, when the bishops were content to be settled presidents, to have a negative voice in all questions relating to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and some superior authority in ordination. This hasty attempt to force on a people, to whom presbytery was dear "as a wife of youth," the highest kind of prelacy, was certainly to pour new wine into old bottles. It could not but produce a disastrous explosion. But nothing could stay the precipitance of that misguided man, who seems to have expected, in the pride of new-blown grandeur, that difficulties would vanish at his touch. It is admitted that he never exerted his powers to the full extent permitted by this act of parliament. Still the passing of such an act furnished those who refused the new model with a plausible justification; and exhibited the capital solecism in policy, of making a legislative invasion of popular rights and

feelings more considerable in the terms of the enactment, than it was really meant to be in the execution.

In his fixed aversion to worldly honours, Leighton besought his friends not to give him the appellation of Lord, and was uneasy at ever being addressed by that title. By this singularity he gave umbrage to his colleagues, and laid himself open to the charge of an affectation, proceeding from narrow-minded squeamishness, if not from a refinement of vanity: or, indeed, this solicitude to divest his office of its usual dignities might be ill-naturedly ascribed to his not being thoroughly satisfied with the function itself, and seeking to compound with his conscience by a sacrifice of external distinction.

Shortly after their arrival in Edinburgh, the Bishops were formally invited to take their seats in parliament: not that any invitation was requisite to authorise their attendance, but it was deemed a proper token of respect. By all, except the Bishop of Dunblane, the call was obeyed. He resolved from the beginning never to mix in parliament, unless some matter affecting the interests of religion were in agitation; and to this resolution he steadily adhered.

His first appearance in parliament was on the question respecting the oath of supremacy. This oath was so worded as to carry on the face of it no demand, beyond what the presbyterians were willing to admit, namely, that the king should be recognised for civil head of the church as well as of the state. Yet there was something in the phraseology so equivocal as to warrant a suspicion, that it was artfully contrived for

a handle by which the sovereign might interfere, at pleasure, and with absolute authority, in the internal regulation of the church. In England such explanations were given, when the oath was tendered, as brought it within the compass of a presbyterian conscience. But when it was required by the Earl of Cassilis, and by other stout covenanters in the parliament of Scotland, that the necessary qualification for reconciling its provisions to their scruples should be inserted into the body of the act, or at least be subjoined to their subscriptions, the High Commissioner would not listen to the demand. Leighton now stepped forward the fearless champion, the eloquent advocate, of moderation and charity. He maintained that trammelling men's consciences with so many rigorous oaths could produce only laxity of moral principle, or unchristian bigotry and party feeling. With respect to the oath itself, he would not dissemble his opinion that it was susceptible of a bad sense; and therefore the tenderness of conscience, which refused to take it without guarding against an evil construction, ought not to be derided. The English papists had obtained this indulgence; and it were strange indeed if protestants were to be more hardly treated. When, in reply to this spirited remonstrance, it was contended by Sharp, that the complaining party, in the day of its ascendency, had been little tender of the consciences of those who revolted at the Solemn League and Covenant, Leighton set before them the unworthiness of retaliating by measures which had been so justly reprobated; and he emphatically pointed out the nobler course, of heaping coals of fire upon the

heads of adversaries, by the contrast of episcopal mildness with presbyterian severity. For them to practise, for the base purpose of quitting scores, the same rigour against which they had vehemently protested when themselves were the victims, would be a foul blot on their christian character, and would justify the sarcasm, that *the world goes mad by turns.* However solid these arguments were, they made no impression on the Earl of Middleton and his creatures, whose project it was to have the oath of that ambiguous cast, which should deter the stiffer covenanters from taking it, and thus bring them under the penalties of disloyalty. One cannot without pain admit an opinion, that bears so hard upon the probity and humanity of the royal party. Yet this would not be a solitary instance of an oath being artfully shaped to entrap persons whom state policy has marked for its victims. Leighton used to observe, with some reference, no doubt, to this transaction, that a consolidation of the episcopal and presbyterian platforms, had it been judiciously and sincerely attempted at the outset, might have been accomplished; but there were some evil spirits at work, "whose device it was plainly again to scatter us; and the terms of comprehension were made so strait, in order to keep men out." It was a transaction, however, that gave a splendid prominence to his own extraordinary virtues, to his enlightened charity, his inexorable honesty, and his generous courage.

Leighton thought with St. Augustin, that a bishopric is not intended for a pastime and amusement: "*Episcopatus non est artificium transigendæ vitæ.*" He therefore resided constantly on his see, and his

holy ministrations watered the places about him with a blessing. Not content to repose in lazy state, he regarded himself as a shepherd of souls, and went about from parish to parish, catechising and preaching; and the poor of Dunblane even now point out the corner of the hearth at which he used to sit conversing with their fathers. But his primary aim was to "heal the fountains;" for he justly considered that if ministers were to become sound in doctrine, exemplary in personal conduct, and sedulous in pastoral duties, the effect of their spirituality and zeal would quickly shew itself in the amended state of their parishes. It would be difficult to do justice to the sense he entertained of the immense responsibility of christian ministers. For himself, as his practice bears witness, he always desired the smallest cure; partly from native humility, and partly from an apprehension, so vivid as to be almost terrible, of the account which must be given in by spiritual overseers at the great tribunal. Often would he commiserate those of the London clergy, the extent of whose cures made it impracticable to pay each individual of their flock the attention his soul required. "Theirs," he observed, "is rightly called *cura animarum*;" a concern, he seems to have meant, full of anxiety and peril. "Were I again," he said in his last retirement, "to be a parish minister, I must follow sinners to their houses, and even to their ale-houses." As one of the faults imputed to the episcopal clergy was unskilfulness in preaching, he was solicitous to remove from his own diocese all colour for this allegation. This he knew could never be effected, until the pulpits were filled by holy men. "It is vain," he would say, "for any one

to speak of divine things, without something of divine affections. An ungodly clergyman must feel uneasy when preaching godliness, and will hardly preach it persuasively. He has not been able to prevail on himself to be holy, and no marvel if he fail of prevailing on others. In truth, he is in great danger of becoming hardened against religion by the frequent inculcation of it, if it fail of melting him."

The following extract from a letter, in which he offers a living to one of his clergy, affords a beautiful specimen of christian politeness, at the same time that it lets us into the Bishop's sense of the temper and affection with which a charge of souls should be undertaken.

SIR,

There is one place indeed in my precinct now vacant, and yet undisposed of, by the voluntary removal of the young man who was in it to a better benefice; and this is likewise in my hand, but it is of so wretchedly mean provision, that I am ashamed to name it, little, I think, above five hundred marks (less than 30*l.* sterling) by year. If the many instances of that kind you have read have made you in love with *voluntary poverty*, there you may have it; but wheresoever you are, or shall be, for the little rest of your time, I hope you are, and still will be, daily advancing in that blest poverty of spirit that is the only true height and greatness of spirit in all the world entitling to a crown, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Oh, what are the scraps that the great ones of this world are scrambling for compared with that pretension! I pray you, as you find an opportunity, though possibly little or no inclination to it, yet bestow one line or two upon

Your poor Friend and Servant,

R. L.

The following letter to the heritors* of the parish of Stratton places in a clear light the upright yet sagacious policy, by which Leighton contrived to fill the vacant benefices with pious men, and to conciliate the goodwill of the parishioners to their new pastors.

Worthy Gentlemen and Friends,

Being informed that it is my duty to present a person, fit for the charge of the ministry now vacant with you, I have thought of one, whose integrity and piety I am so fully persuaded of, that I dare confidently recommend him to you, as one who, if the hand of God do bind that work upon him amongst you, is likely, through the blessing of the same hand, to be very serviceable to the building up of your souls heavenwards; but is as far from suffering himself to be obtruded, as I am from obtruding any upon you: so that unless you invite him to preach, and, after hearing him, declare your consent and desire towards his embracing of the call, you may be secure from the trouble of hearing any further concerning him, either from himself or me: and if you please to let me know your mind, your reasonable satisfaction shall be to my utmost power endeavoured by

Your affectionate friend
And humble servant,
R. Leighton.

The charges of this venerable prelate to the clergy of the diocesan synod of Dunblane are valuable and interesting records, as well on account of the sterling good sense and piety with which they abound, as of the light they shed on his professional character and

* The heritors of a parish are the owners of the real property within it.

deportment. From the instructions which he found it necessary to issue in the year of his inauguration, it may be inferred that the district over which he presided had made no extraordinary proficiency in godliness under presbyterian tuition. He prescribed such rules of worship and discipline, as were indicated by the disorders of the existing system, and were adapted to correct the flagrant immoralities of the time and place. Officiating ministers were directed to read portions of the Old and New Testaments, not after the irreverent manner hitherto in vogue, of making it a by-work while the congregation was assembling, but as an integral and important part of the service. It was the Bishop's wish, that the Lord's prayer, the Apostles' creed, and the doxology, should be restored to more frequent use; that a weekly day should be appointed for catechising; and that an easy summary of christian doctrine should be agreed upon by his clergy, to be made the basis of catechetical instructions to the young and the ignorant. Probably the short catechism, which is among his printed works, was composed for this purpose. The sermons of that period generally ran in a high strain of controversy. Against this the Bishop set his face; and he laboured to bring into the place of subtle and passionate disputations a modest and sober style of preaching, that should be level to the capacities and calculated to mend the morals of the lower classes. On the ignorance and viciousness of the people in general he touches sorrowfully; and he warns his clergy against slackness and timidity in reproving the prevalent sins of their

respective parishes. Large portions of holy scripture were preferred by him, as subjects for sermons, to single texts; for he thought they offered more scope for pithy practical remark, and were better calculated to engage the attention of the auditory.

Though friendly to a grave and masculine eloquence, of which he was himself no common master, yet his chief desire was that discourses from the pulpit should be simple and perspicuous. After hearing a plain and homely sermon, he expressed the highest satisfaction; "For the good man," said he in reference to the preacher, "seems in earnest to catch souls." The measure of speech, he remarked, (and the remark is well worthy of being preserved,) ought to be the character of the audience, which is made up for the most part of illiterate persons.

Any deliberate opinion of this great man must deserve respect, even when it may not command acquiescence. It would therefore be wrong to omit mentioning, that he disliked the practice of reading sermons, a practice scarcely known beyond the seas; being of opinion that it detracted much from the weight and authority of preaching. "I know (he said) that weakness of the memory is pleaded in excuse for this custom; but better minds would make better memories. Such an excuse is unworthy of a man, and much more of a father, who may want vent indeed in addressing his children, but ought never to want matter. Like Elihu, he should be refreshed by speaking."

Although disposed to lenity, he was not regardless of discipline. Gross offences committed in his diocese

were to be branded with church censures; and the restoration of offenders to the communion of the church was to be delayed, till they had given proof of genuine repentance.

It was among his pious plans to bring about a more frequent celebration of the Lord's supper, which, in those days, was not in every place so much as an annual ceremony; and he wished the people to be carefully instructed in the spiritual import of this holy rite, and to be frequently exhorted to maintain a constant fitness for it by framing their lives by the model of the gospel. He also made it incumbent on his clergy to promote the practice of family worship, and to exercise a watchful superintendence over their flocks, bearing the spiritual burdens of every member, and dealing out to each, as his case might require, instruction, or counsel, or reproof, or consolation.

It has already been stated, how careful he was to put his clergy in remembrance, that no substantial good could be expected from their ministrations, unless they were themselves remarkable for sanctity of heart and life; men of prayer, of study, and meditation; of "great contempt of this present world, and inflamed affections towards heaven;" whose pure and peaceable demeanour, full of mercy and good fruits, should stamp them for the sons of God and servants of the meek and lowly Jesus. He also considered a singular modesty and gravity even in externals, such as their apparel and the adjustment of their hair, to be highly becoming in ministers, whose profession

it was to give themselves wholly to the care of immortal souls.

Having these things much at heart, he gave in a paper at the synod of 1667, in which, after a most conciliatory introduction, and blaming himself for having, through averseness to lord it over Christ's heritage, been more backward to admonish them than perhaps his situation demanded, he proceeds to urge the importance of adding life and efficiency to those "privy trials," in which the presbyters used to examine each other for mutual correction and edification. These examinations, he is satisfied, might be made highly salutary to those who were declining in zeal and diligence, were entangled in doctrinal errors, or were in any way swerving from the path of ministerial duty, provided they were so conducted, as to constrain a man to serious reflection upon himself; and, with a view to their being rendered thus useful, he lays down some admirable rules, which are included in the body of his works.

Let it here be noticed how remote this holy man is from an imperious and domineering exercise of his authority. Instead of peremptorily exacting submission from his clergy, he industriously waives the claims arising from his eminent station, and wins their obedience, in his dealings with them, by urbanity and gentleness. It is asserted by Wodrow and others, that the clergy of Dunblane were notoriously ignorant and disorderly. I have met with nothing to corroborate this heavy charge; and from their diocesan's pastoral letters and addresses, it is rather to be inferred

that their defects have been overstated, or else were greatly corrected during his administration. He seems to have judged it expedient to raise them as nearly to a level with himself, as the indispensable dignity of episcopal government would allow; and whatever alterations he thought necessary were proposed in the shape of friendly suggestion, and not of overbearing dictation. The only priority he sought was in labours; the only ascendency he coveted was in self-denial and holiness; and in this career he had few competitors for precedency.

Proceeding steadily upon these principles, and exerting all his influence to impart to others the same fervency of spirit, he drew upon himself the eyes of all Scotland, which gazed with amazement at his bright and singular virtues, as at an angel of light traversing a sky of gloom and tempest. Even the presbyterians were softened by his christian urbanity and meekness, and were constrained to admit that on him had descended a double portion of the apostolic spirit. Had his colleagues in office resembled him in temper, it is not extravagant to believe that the attempt to restore episcopacy would have had a more prosperous issue.

As there is no record of Leighton having taken a prominent part in the settlement of the church, during the earlier part of his episcopacy, we may assume that he confined himself to private advice and expostulation; hoping that when the happy results of his own pacific proceedings should be visible, the other Bishops would be induced to follow in his track. But

it soon became apparent that the plans in progress for extirpating the presbyterian discipline were diametrically opposite to the dictates of wisdom and mercy. I find him expressing himself, in allusion no doubt to the leading men of this period, with a poignant recollection of the selfish craft by which they were characterized. Seeing them destitute of christian simplicity and singleness of purpose, he lost all heart about the issue of their measures, and styled them in the phraseology of scripture, "empty vines bringing forth fruit unto themselves." "I have met with many cunning plotters," he would say, "but with few truly honest and skilful undertakers. Many have I seen who were wise and great as to this world; but of such as are willing to be weak that others may be strong, and whose only aim it is to promote the prosperity of Zion, have I not found one in ten thousand."

Having made these afflicting discoveries, and finding all his efforts to put things in a better train quite ineffectual, Leighton thought he should be justified in laying down the charge, which he had taken up, not as a dignity, but as a cross and burden. He resolved, however, to go up to London in the first instance, and to lay before the royal eye, which had hitherto been deluded with fallacious representations, a faithful picture of the distempered and convulsed state of Scotland. Having obtained an interview with Charles, he declared that the severities practised upon objectors to the new establishment were such as his conscience could not justify, even for the sake

of planting christianity in a heathen land: much less could he agree to them for an end so comparatively insignificant, as that of substituting one form of ecclesiastical government for another. He therefore besought permission to resign his bishopric, lest by retaining it he should seem to be a party to violences, at which his principles and feelings revolted. His Majesty professed disapprobation of the manner in which the affairs of the church were administered by Sharp, and seemed touched by the pathetic arguments of the virtuous advocate of toleration. He pledged himself to stop that application of the secular sword, against which Leighton protested; and he actually annulled the ecclesiastical commission, whose province it was to goad dissenters into conformity by fines and gaols and corporal punishments. But he would not hear of Leighton's vacating his see; and the bishop consented at length to retain it, as the only way of holding the King to those engagements into which he had been reluctantly impelled.

Leighton had so fully made up his mind to withdraw at this time from his station, that he had bidden a solemn farewell to his clergy before his departure for London. After winding up the regular business of the synod in October 1665, he informed them that there was a matter which though of little concern to them and the church, he still thought it his duty to notify to them. He then announced his intention of retiring; and the reasons he assigned for it were, the sense he entertained of his own unworthiness to sustain so high an office, and his weariness of those

contentions which had clothed the household of God in mourning, and seemed to be increasing rather than abating. "For myself, Brethren, I have to thank you for the undeserved respect and kindness which I have all along experienced at your hands. Let me entreat your good construction of the poor endeavours I have used to serve you, and to assist you in promoting the work of the ministry and the great designs of the gospel. If in any thing, whether by word or deed, I have given you offence, or unnecessarily pained a single individual among you, I do earnestly and humbly crave forgiveness. My last advice to you is, that you continue in the study of peace and holiness, and grow and abound in love to your great Lord and Master, and to the souls for which he died. Finally, Brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of peace and love shall be with you. Amen."

About two years afterwards, the growing calamities of the church called for prompt and vigorous remedies. It was decreed by the council, that all incumbents should obtain presentation from the patrons and episcopal institution, or forthwith resign their benefices. This intemperate act, of which the credit is given to Bishop Fairfowl, occasioned all at once a great number of vacancies, which fit and able men were not at hand to supply. Had the most considerable of the nonconformist ministers been gradually and quietly superseded, an explosion of popular wrath might have been avoided. But when, in ad-

dition to the grievance of being deprived of their own ministers, the congregations were required to receive, in the place of these revered pastors, men whose morals were not always clear of reproach, and who were mostly ill provided with learning and piety for a ministerial charge, their disgust at prelatical innovations settled into a ferocious antipathy to the new constitution of the church.

It was the misfortune of these times, moreover, that owing to the King's dislike of business, and immoral levity, the government took its tone from the views or whims of the principal minister, or the reigning favourite, for the time being; and public measures were in perpetual mutation. There was no steady hand, endued with competent force and authority to prevent the most baneful fluctuations of the body politic. Not that the unsteadiness of the helm should be attributed solely to the monarch's capriciousness or supineness. It proceeded, in part, from the difficulty he found in carrying on together his two favorite objects, of pulling down presbyterianism, and building up popery: it being hard to inflict a blow upon the former, without wounding the latter; or to enact laws favorable to the Roman Catholic dissenter, the benefit of which should not extend to the Presbyterian. Nothing, however, could be more adverse to the settlement of Scotch affairs, than such a vacillating administration. At times, the bishops were armed with almost unlimited powers for the subversion of presbyterianism: but, before sufficient space had been allowed for the success of a resolute des-

potism, if despotic measures could have succeeded, their powers were abridged; a clog was put on their career of intolerance; and the other party, from being discouraged and enfeebled, was roused to fresh hope and resistance. Then, a sudden return to arbitrary measures would cut short the experiment of conciliation; or it would be tried on too limited and partial a scale to answer any other purpose than that of making the subsequent severities, or those which were all the while going forward in adjacent districts, to be the more conspicuous and galling.

Resuming the thread of our narration, we are to relate the proceedings of the Bishop of Dunblane, in the year 1667, in conjunction with Lord Tweedale, who possessed, according to Burnet's estimate, true benevolence, along with much political information and talent, but was overcautious and timid, and prone to side with any government. This nobleman, who fortunately had the chief confidence of Lauderdale, viewed with an aching heart the disorders of his country, and vigorously applied himself to heal them before they should be grown incurable. He saw at once that Leighton was the fittest man to be at the head of the ecclesiastical administration *. And indeed

* The following extract from the History of Scotland by Sir George Mackenzie, who was a leading character in these times, and Lord Advocate, will be appropriate in this part of our narrative.

"The Debates and Transactions which fell in at this time, discovered very much to our Statesmen, how far each of the present Clergy stood affected to the Supremacy of the Civil Magistrate in Church affairs, and in what they approved or disapproved the late Indulgence; for the advice of many Churchmen, not properly interested, was asked at this time, rather to know their inclination, than for information; and it was

it was high time for some capable man to be fixed in that station, since, as matters now went on, the business of the church constituted more than two-thirds of the whole business of the state. Accordingly he spared no pains to engage Leighton's co-operation; and in order to that co-operation being made more effectual, he let slip no opportunity of impressing the King with an opinion of his superlative merits, and of his competence to the chief direction of ecclesiastical affairs. Had he succeeded in this project, it was his hope to winnow the church, by degrees, of the vain and worthless characters with which it was infested; and to bring in a set of men who would adorn their profession, and recommend the episcopal frame by

easily found, that the Bishop of Dunblane was the most proper and fit person to serve the State in the Church, according to the present platform of government now resolved upon; for he was in much esteem for his piety and moderation, amongst the people, and as to which the Presbyterians themselves could neither reproach or equal him; albeit they hated him most of all his fraternity, in respect he drew many into a kindness for Episcopacy, by his exemplary life, rather than debates. His great principle was, that devotion was the great affair about which Churchmen should employ themselves; and that the gaining of souls, and not the external government, was their proper task; nor did he esteem it fit, and scarce lawful to Churchmen, to sit in Councils and Judicatories, these being diversions from the main. And albeit his judgment did lead him to believe the Church of England the best modelled of all others, both for doctrine and discipline, yet did he easily conform with the practice of the Christians amongst whom he lived, and therefore lived peaceably under Presbytery, till it was abolished: and when he undertook to be Bishop himself, he opposed all violent courses, whereby men were forced to comply with the present worship, beyond their persuasions; and he granted a latitude and indulgence to those of his own diocese, before the king had allowed any by his letter. This made the world believe that he was the author to his Majesty of that public Indulgence; and the Statesmen, who were unwilling to be authors of an innovation, which some there thought might prove dangerous, were well satisfied to have it so believed; but, however, these principles rendered him a fit instrument in their present undertakings."—Page 161.

undeniable piety and talent. How far Leighton fell in with this excellent design, as it concerned his own advancement, is not related; but he consented to undertake another fatiguing journey to London, and again to implore the redress of those grievances, under which the church was wasting away. On this second visit, he had two audiences of Charles, in which he fulfilled the duty of a faithful ambassador. He exposed without disguise the distempered state of the realm, and showed how those diseases, which might have yielded to gentle and seasonable remedies, had been exasperated by harsh and empirical treatment. His first object was to awaken the King to the necessity of adopting healing measures without delay, as the only means of averting a fatal crisis. Then, without hazarding a premature exposure of the expedients which were dictated by the present exigency, he humbly advised that an attempt should be made, by some act of comprehension, to draw the more temperate of the presbyterian party within the pale of the establishment; and he warned his Majesty of the danger he would run of losing episcopacy altogether, by refusing to surrender any of its appendages. The ship would sail less gallantly, it was true, with her topmasts cut away; but that was her only chance of outriding the tempest.

The King professed to fall in with the moderate measures recommended by Lord Tweedale and Leighton. But the passions of the covenanters had been allowed to effervesce so long, and they were so incensed by the King's breach of faith and by the

oppressiveness of the High Commission, that it was hardly to be expected that any ministerial philters, how artfully soever compounded, would avail to charm back their affections. Nor were the presbyterian chieftains remiss or unskilful in fomenting the popular discontent. A breath from them would have extinguished the smoking firebrand; but that breath was applied to fan it into a flame. Young and fiery preachers ranged up and down the country, sounding the tocsin of the Covenant, and warning the people against the deadly plague of the prelatic leprosy. The cause of presbyterianism against episcopacy was the battle of Jehovah with Baal. It was a holy war for the rescue of the ark of the covenant from the hands of uncircumcised Philistines; and it was set forth under such aspects as should respectively attract both the bad and the good;—miscreants who loved tumult and throve by the disorders of the commonwealth, along with men of a tender conscience or a resolute piety. Accordingly, these fanatical incendiaries had great success. The rabble were lashed into madness by having their wrongs and their duties perpetually rung in their ears; and being countenanced, it is to be feared, by men above the rabble in birth and educa tion, but not in moderation and virtue, they scrupled at nothing that might evince their hatred to the episcopal incumbents, and compel them to withdraw. To this end affronts and indignities were heaped upon their heads: they could not pass to and from church, in the discharge of their clerical duties, without encountering volleys of reproaches and curses, or even missiles more

dangerous to their persons. Their houses were no longer a sanctuary; their property was plundered, and their lives were attempted. Worn out by this series of persecutions, and despairing of a change for the better, many of these unhappy curates abandoned their parishes, a few with some, but most of them without any, pecuniary compensation.

While the ill-cemented edifice of Scottish episcopacy was rocking in this tempest, the spirit of infatuation had fallen on all the bishops except Leighton; and his oracular voice, though lifted up boldly, was drowned in the clamour for pushing forward the new system without pause or relaxation. He persisted however in those pacific measures which the King had engaged to sanction. He tried to persuade the leading statesmen to second them with their authority; and he suggested the expediency of repealing those absurd laws, which rated the episcopal authority far higher than any of the bishops dared to carry into practice. Taking notice of the extraordinary concessions made by the African Church to the Donatists, who were to the full as extravagant as the people of his own day, he was an advocate for going a great way towards meeting their demands, and for so lengthening the cords and stretching out the curtains of the episcopal frame, as to take in all the covenanters who were not implacable recusants. Although the concessions, to which he was prepared to proceed, went near to vacate the episcopal office, yet he thought them justified by the improbability of their permanence; for he believed that when the present race of untameable

zealots was laid in the grave, and a season of peace had allowed the revival of sober sense and charity, there would be a readiness on the part of the people to reinvest the bishop with such prerogatives, as he had been unreasonably compelled to lay down at the shrine of religious concord.

The articles proposed by Leighton for the basis of an accommodation, are reported by Burnet in nearly the following words.

1. That the church should be governed by the bishops and their clergy, mixing together in the church judicatories, in which the bishop should act only as a president, and be determined by the majority of his presbyters, in matters both of jurisdiction and ordination.

2. That the presbyters should be allowed, when they first sat down in their judicatories, to declare that their sitting under a bishop was submitted to by them for peace sake; with a reservation of their opinion with relation to any such presidency; and that no negative vote should be claimed by the bishop.

3. That bishops should go to the churches, in which such as were candidates for ordination were to serve, and hear and discuss any exceptions that were made to them, and ordain them with the concurrence of the presbytery.

4. That such as were to be ordained should have leave to declare their opinion, if they held that the bishop was only the head of the presbyters.

5. That provincial synods should sit in course every third year, or oftener if the King summoned them; in

which complaints of the bishops should be received, and they should be censured according to their deserts.

It was not to be expected that such a scheme would go down smoothly with the patrons of the new system. There was an outcry against it as a measure subversive of episcopacy, which it certainly despoiled of some capital dignities and powers. Against this Leighton urged, that it was better to depress episcopacy below the scriptural model, than to suffer the church to continue a prey to those factions, which had already carried a sword into its bowels: and he tried to soothe still more the indignant prelatists by shewing it to be highly probable, that the locks of which episcopacy was unhandsomely shorn would rapidly grow again; and that, like a moulted eagle, it would ere long soar aloft with renovated strength and richer plumage.

As there is no reason, on the one hand, to suspect the Bishop of Dunblane of having endeavoured to propitiate the high episcopalians, by holding out hopes which he thought unlikely to be verified, so, on the other hand, there is not the slightest ground for charging him with duplicity, because, while proposing an excessive abasement of the episcopal office, he anticipated its partial redintegration. Had he artfully shaped the proposed constitution, so as to leave a handle by which the bishops might recover their abdicated authority; or had he purposely made the machinery liable to accidents and embarrassments, which it would need an augmentation of the episcopal influence to remedy, he would justly have incurred the reproach of double-dealing. But it is obvious that he studied,

with the greatest good faith, to accommodate his plan to the presbyterian taste, as nearly as the government with which he acted would endure. No doubt he augured that the presbyterian ministers themselves, as soon as the fever of faction and bigotry should be allayed, must open their eyes to the inconvenience of so immoderately retrenching the powers of their chief functionary. Such a prognostication would be creditable to his sagacity, without disparagement to his integrity. In order to form an adequate estimate of this great Bishop's merits, it is necessary to reflect upon the extraordinary difficulties with which he had to contend. He was mediating between two fierce parties, who agreed in nothing but unkind suspicions of himself; and it was hardly within the compass of human skill and wisdom, in that tempestuous season, to steer so exactly through a narrow and intricate channel, as to escape the rocks on one side without striking upon those on the other. It was his difficult task to keep on terms with the impatient arrogance of the episcopal party, at the same time that he accommodated himself to the crabbed humours and contracted genius of the nonconformists. He had at once to propitiate jealous adversaries, and to obviate the misconduct of lukewarm or dishonest confederates. One while he was thwarted by the king's despotic jealousies, and again he was traversed by the selfish wiliness of Lauderdale. That he should have done so much, and endured so bravely, must therefore be ascribed to a zeal, a diligence, a constancy, a wisdom, an unquenchable benevolence, and a valorous self-devotion, before

which every thing bent but the inflexible sinews of relentless bigotry.

It was the Earl of Kirkardine's advice, that no treaty should be attempted with the presbyterians, but that whatever concessions it might be thought expedient to make should pass into laws; and he thought that when it was clearly understood that nothing further would be gained by holding out, there would be a general acquiescence in the new arrangements. In this opinion Leighton concurred; but Lord Lauderdale refused his assent, with a sinister purpose, it was shrewdly suspected, of frustrating the attempt at accommodation. It was then resolved to try whether any thing could be effected by private negotiation. With this view Burnet was sent to Hutchinson *, who was connected with him by marriage, and was esteemed the most learned man of that party, to sound his sentiments on the Comprehension, but not to propose it officially. The wary minister took care, however, not to commit himself, observing that he was but one of many, and his opinion that of a simple individual. All he would say was, that the project was not in his eyes very promising; but he reserved his sentence on the particular concessions proposed, until they should be ratified by competent authority.

Shortly after this abortive negotiation, the experiment was tried of granting some of the vacant churches

* George Hutchinson was educated at Glasgow, and was accounted one of the greatest preachers of the presbyterian party. He was a learned man, and wrote on the twelve minor prophets, on the book of Job, and on the gospel of St. John. He died in the year 1674.

to the most moderate of the presbyterian ministers. The adoption of this measure was accelerated, if not occasioned, by a letter of Burnet to Lord Tweedale, in which he strongly advised it; and being known to cherish an almost filial reverence for Leighton, it was naturally presumed that he was the organ of that Bishop's sentiments. The fact is, however, that the letter in question had not been imparted to Leighton, nor would it, there is reason to think, have obtained his concurrence.

This measure, which was contrary to the law, that had vested the right of parochial institution in the bishops, was productive of little or no advantage. The indulged ministers could not, in common decency, launch out against the episcopal platform; and they were driven to preach more on christian doctrine and practice than suited the temper of the times. Hence they fell under a reproach with their several congregations, which prevented their usefulness; and what with the contemptuous invectives of the non-indulged ministers on the one hand, and the unkind reception they met with from the presbyterian laity on the other, they seem to have rapidly sunk into a state of cowardly supineness, which extinguished all the hopes that had been raised on their appointment.

In November, 1669, a bill was laid before the parliament of Scotland, well known as the Assertory Act, which carried to an exorbitant extent the royal prerogative. It asserted, that "all things relating to the external government of the church belonged to the crown; and that all things relating to ecclesiastical

meetings, matters, and persons, were to be ordered according to such directions as the King should send to his privy council." There is reason to believe that a leading object with the devisers of this bill was, to curry favour with the heir presumptive to the throne, by paving the way for the ingress of popery. Yet it was artfully contrived to catch the passions of the presbyterians, who thought the chance for the total extinction of prelacy would be greater, if it rested with an individual to abolish it at any time with a single dash of the pen, than if it could only be effected through the tedious formalities and contentious proceedings of parliament. Some moderate men, Lord Tweedale avowedly, and probably the Bishop of Dunblane, regarded this measure with more favour, or, strictly speaking, with less aversion, than it merited; for they imagined that it was designed only to justify the Indulgence, and to remove impediments out of the way of that pacific policy on which the King had entered. It is to be lamented that Leighton should have been inveigled by these considerations into voting for a measure, which added such dangerous powers to the crown. It was not indeed till after many demurs, and insisting upon several modifications, that he at length yielded it his suffrage: but what was his indignation at finding interpolated in the bill, when it came out with the royal sanction, the momentous words "ecclesiastical affairs;" while sundry saving and explanatory clauses, which had been inserted at his instance in the rough draught, were omitted! Such a scandalous fraud is perfectly credible of the profligate statesmen of those iniquitous times,

and will go far, with candid minds, to vindicate the Bishop from the blame of temporising: but to the end of his days he reflected on this affair with self-reproach, and bitterly regretted that his judgment should have slumbered on such an occasion.

The first exertion of the authority vested in the Sovereign by this bill was the removal of Archbishop Burnet from Glasgow, in which see he had earned but a sorry reputation for episcopal virtues. Immediately after his deposal, Leighton was pressed by the Earls of Lauderdale and Tweedale to accept the vacant dignity. To this proposal he testified the utmost repugnance, and indeed pertinaciously withstood it, till he was induced to believe that his translation to a sphere of such extensive influence, would bring him nearer to the grand and governing object of his life; the King's ministry having engaged to lend its utmost support to his plan of accommodation. In consequence of this promotion, he received a summons to court; and in his way up to London he called on Dr. Gilbert Burnet, who then filled the chair of divinity at Glasgow. With him he concerted the likeliest means of composing the feuds of the church; a work, in which he had embarked with the spirit of a martyr, and which he strenuously followed up by labours and watchings, through conflicts, defamation, and outrages, with toil of body and anguish of heart;—a dearer price than he would have consented to give for any worldly dignities, though far short of the sacrifices he was capable of making to ensure the welfare of the christian Zion.

It has been related that, two years before, Leighton had intimated pretty plainly to the King the necessity of resorting to some extraordinary measures, to rescue the episcopal church from impending ruin. At that conference, however, he submitted no specific expedient: fearing perhaps to impede his own designs by overforwardness; and convinced that the measures, which he had in contemplation, were such as royalty would never endure, until driven to them by an obvious and urgent necessity. But now that two years longer experience had revealed the dangerous folly of attempting to produce uniformity by compulsion; and now that Leighton, by his elevation to the metropolitan see of Glasgow, stood on more advantageous ground for dealing plainly with the Sovereign, no reason remained for delay. Mingling policy with truth, he represented the vast advantage that would accrue to his Majesty's government from conciliating the people of Scotland. Nor was the King insensible to the sound sense of the Archbishop's representations. Accordingly he acceded to all that was demanded of him, and caused a paper of instructions to be drawn up, conformable to the Archbishop's ideas, and to be transmitted to the Earl of Lauderdale, accompanied with orders to that minister to obtain the enactment of corresponding laws. There are symptoms, however, in this transaction of Charles, of that recklessness of falsehood, with which he was deeply tainted both in his domestic and civil character. Lauderdale too was a minister, whose movements always answered to the wishes of his profligate master; and it would be hard

to conceive that any good scheme should pass through such hands, without miscarrying or turning to evil.

When Leighton had compassed this point, his next endeavour was to generate such a spirit in his diocese, as should favour his conciliatory operations;—such a genial atmosphere of holy charity, if the expression may be allowed, as should suit with the medicinal process he had instituted for restoring the health of the country. To do this effectually it was expedient that he should remove to Glasgow; the affairs of which see, from a modest repugnance to assume the archiepiscopal dignities, he had hitherto administered, as Commendator only, from a distance. Indeed, it appears from the register of the parliamentary council, that, though nominated and presented, he was never formally translated to the see of Glasgow. As soon as he had removed to this city from Dunblane, he held a synod of his clergy, who were loud in their complaints of desertion and ill-usage, and craved immediate redress. This appeal was not answered with promises of compelling the people to attend the church, and of inflicting fines and other punishments on the contumacious. To the surprise and mortification of the clergy, who were little accustomed to such doctrines, the only weapons recommended by their metropolitan were of ethereal temper;—forbearance, conciliation, and a humble waiting upon God. "Leighton, in a sermon that he preached to them, and in several discourses both in public and private, exhorted them to look up more to God; to consider themselves as the ministers of the cross of Christ; to bear the contempt and ill

usage they met with, as a cross laid on them for the exercise of their faith and patience; to lay aside all the appetites of revenge; to humble themselves before God; to have many days for secret fasting and prayers; and to meet often together, that they might quicken and assist one another in those holy exercises; and then they might expect blessings from heaven upon their labours." *

Not content with these endeavours to improve his clergy, he also went about the country, taking Burnet with him, on a visit to the most influential of the indulged ministers, whom he tried to gain over by sound argumentation and by christian gentleness. He let them know, that propositions would shortly be laid before them in a more regular form, with a view of allaying the heats and jealousies that now burnt so fiercely, of putting an end to the unhappy differences that separated brother from brother, and of uniting all parties in the bonds of amicable forbearance at least, if not of perfect unanimity. He also pledged himself that the business should be carried on with unreserved cordiality; that no offers on his part should be retracted or frittered away; and that, on being accepted, they should forthwith pass into laws. But in this embassy of love he was met with chilling unkindness. Not a grain of concession could be extorted from the covenanters; who probably inferred from the gratuitous advances made towards them, that the balance in the royal

* Burnet's History of his own Time; Book II.

counsels was inclining in their favour. Perhaps, too, they were the more indisposed to appreciate the ingenuousness of Leighton, through the subtlety of factious emissaries, who found it an easy task to confirm in their obduracy minds more than half seared by protracted animosities and rancourous reflections. In their views the complete success of their party was identified with the triumph of Christ's Church; and prelatic domination with the supremacy of Antichrist. They were debarred by an imperious conscience from entering into any terms of composition with the impure Spirit, which had issued from the bottomless pit, and was blasting their goodly Zion; and they dreaded the condemnation of Saul in the war of Amalek, should they spare any part of the Babylonish system from utter extermination. Such were their principles, expressed in such language; and consistent with these was the welcome given to the Archbishop's overtures for an accommodation. Sometimes, indeed, his condescension was requited with absolute incivility and rudeness. He therefore returned from his apostolic circuit, dispirited and almost despondent; yet still resolved to try the experiment of a solemn and official congress with the presbyterian leaders; it being possible that some spirits among them of softer mould might be wrought upon to entertain his proposals. Should the attempt fail, it would still have discovered to the nation at large, with what party it rested that the wounds of the church were not healed; and while it fully acquitted the episcopalians of intolerance, it would

expose the machinations and diminish the credit of the enemies of peace and unity.

The first meeting took place at Holyrood-House in Edinburgh, on the 9th of August, 1670. Lauderdale, the High Commissioner, with some Lords of the Council, Leighton, Professor Burnet, and Patterson, afterwards archbishop of Glasgow, formed the array on one side; and on the opposite side appeared Hutchinson, Wedderburn, Ramsay, and two other ministers of repute with their party.

Lauderdale opened the meeting with a conciliatory harangue, in which he besought the presbyterian disputants to assist the royal commissioners, in conformity with his majesty's earnest wishes, to appease the commotions of the church, and to settle it anew on a basis of reciprocal concession. He was followed by Leighton, who dwelt feelingly on the evils of schism, and detailed the calamities which had already resulted from the mutual alienation of episcopalians and anti-episcopalians; but earnestly trusted that both parties would now co-operate, heart and hand, in washing out this stain of protestantism, and introducing an era of fraternal love and concord. After declaring the readiness of the bishops to stoop to the lowest point of defensible condescension in meeting the presbyterian scruples, he drew a comparison between the rival platforms; pointing out the defects inherent in the presbyterian, and the ground there was for concluding that episcopacy had existed in substance, if not in name, from the infantile age of christianity. He laboured to convince them, that

many parts of the presbyterian discipline had not the sanction of apostolic practice, and bore no signature of a divine appointment: that, in establishing a form of ecclesiastical government, we are free to institute offices of which the inspired volume furnishes no precedent, provided nothing contrary to the orders of Christ, and to the spirit of his religion, be admitted; and that, by submitting to the episcopal form, they would not bind themselves to comply with any thing repugnant to the dispensation of the gospel, or to tolerate any encroachment on the pastoral functions. If, however, they scrupled to allow of fixed presidents nominated by the Sovereign; or if they apprehended that along with the presidency some more exceptionable jurisdiction would accrue to the bishops; against these contingencies they should be at liberty to enter a prospective protest, in as full and public a manner as they pleased. Such latitude being granted to tender consciences, he thought the sacrifices it remained for them to make could be refused only by fastidiousness, squeamishness, or vexatious obstinacy; and he conjured them to weigh the whole matter, as in the presence of God, without respect to party or popularity. No answer, or none of any consequence, was returned at the time to this powerful address: but, the following morning, Hutchinson went with his colleagues, whose prolocutor he seems to have been, to the Archbishop's chamber, and there argued at length on the propositions submitted to them the preceding day. Lauderdale wanted an im mediate and positive answer; but from this the minis-

ters excused themselves, on the ground that they could speak only as individuals, having no authority to stipulate for their brethren in general. The plea was considered reasonable, and proceedings were suspended till the 1st of November; in which interval they were to collect the sentiments of their fraternity, and to come to the next conference prepared with a record which might be acted upon as official. Lord Lauderdale was naturally haughty and irritable; and having been used to the refinement of courts, he might find it hard to brook, and would be apt to misconstrue, conscientious plain-dealing. Certain it is, however, that he imbibed on this occasion a very unfavorable opinion of the nonconformists. He complained of their behaviour being rude and crafty; and it required all Leighton's fine temper and management to prevent his handling them roughly.

About this time, the Archbishop conceived a plan for clearing his diocese of scandalous ministers. For this purpose he appointed a board of examiners, who were empowered to summon before them any officiating minister, against whom his parishioners had charges to prefer. The King's Council however interposed, and added to this consistory certain lay commissioners:—a suspicious interference, that seemed intended to perplex the business, and prevent its being done effectually. Such at least was the result: for the prosecution of clerical delinquencies was hampered with so many difficulties, and the accuser fell under such heavy penalties if he failed to substantiate his deposition, that few parishes ventured to impeach

their minister, except for immoralities too notorious to be denied, and too gross to be palliated.

I cannot ascertain whether it were before, or shortly after, the initial convocation, that Leighton fell upon another expedient to further the great end, for which alone he seemed to live. He sent on a tour to the western counties Burnet and five other episcopal clergymen, among whom were Nairn and Charteris, divines in the highest esteem for erudition and piety. The object of this mission is variously reported. In a paper of the Lansdown manuscripts, which is copied with some additions into Wodrow's disingenuous history, it is pretended that Leighton anticipated nothing short of a national conversion from the eloquence of these missionaries. From Burnet, however, who could not be misinformed of the Archbishop's motives, we learn that the directions given to himself and his associates were,—"to argue upon the grounds of the accommodation." In his account of this transaction there is a palpable fairness which carries conviction. He frankly admits that the people did not flock to them in crowds, although a congregation respectably numerous was seldom wanting; and he pays a high tribute to the religious information and argumentative skill of the common people, and to their readiness on scriptural topics, though he found these excellencies marred with a bitter leaven of self-conceit, and "a most entangled scrupulosity." This pious attempt was productive of no lasting benefit: for no sooner had the episcopal detachment quitted the field, than it was reoccupied by the conventicles, which

had been at a stand during their stay; and hot-brained preachers cast again the torch of bigotry upon materials which were lamentably prone to inflame. In truth, the measures now in train for winning over the anti-episcopal party to moderate sentiments, failing of that happy issue, did but widen the breach; as is commonly the result of abortive efforts at reconciliation. The fire, not being stifled, was stirred. Met together to canvass the proffered indulgence, the covenanters had their spirits inflamed by debate and altercation; and as they went on arguing, the points which severed them from the pale of episcopacy seemed to multiply, and to grow in importance. Regarding the overtures of the royal commissioners as a stratagem for enticing the garrison of presbyterianism into a surrender of its principal bulwarks, they animated each other to persist in a resistance, of which they augured a speedy and glorious termination, against that two-fold mystery of iniquity, prelatic domination and servile Erastianism. "They helped every one his neighbour, and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage." In vain did Leighton endeavour by papers of logical argument, or of pathetic remonstrance, to persuade them, that by altering their discipline in some few particulars which nowise affected its essence, they would only be conforming to a principle on which they had acted during Cromwell's usurpation, and even subsequently to the Restoration. None of these considerations had any weight with men, the excesses of whose zeal were prescribed or ratified by a stern and moody conscience. If he attempted by letters to impress some of the more

dispassionate ministers with opinions favorable to his proposal, the attempt was reprobated as unfair; and not a little offence was taken at his venturing, in epistolary correspondence with his private friends, to reflect upon the spirit which had shown itself in the presbyterian party, and to prognosticate the failure of the negotiation *.

But Leighton, though wearied and brokenhearted, resolved on another attempt to burst the strongholds of presbyterian prejudice, or the still less penetrable barriers of party spirit:

——————————— ter saxea tentat
Limina nequicquam; ter fessus valle resedit.

After some vexatious opposition, another conference took place at Paisley, on the 14th of December 1670, in which the Archbishop, assisted by two clergymen, entered the lists with about twenty-six of the non-conformists. It was opened, in a manner illustrative of the candour and piety of Leighton, by a prayer from the oldest minister in the town. The Archbishop then made an able and eloquent speech, in which he went over the old ground; but aimed especially at making his opponents sensible, how unreasonable and blameable it was to abate nothing on their side, but to exact unbounded concession from the other. He further urged them to reflect, whether they would have refused communion with the church at the period of the Nicene Council; and yet episcopacy was then of a

* See Letters in the Appendix.

lordlier character than it now affected in Scotland *. On the other side it was contended, that archbishops were unknown to the primitive church; that bishops were parochial, and not diocesan; that two might act together in one church; and that they were elected by their presbyters, to whom they were accountable for the discharge of their functions. To these objections Professor Burnet, at the request of Leighton who was

* The following citation from a work entitled, "The Present State of Scotland," by Matthias Symson, Canon of Lincoln, shows that episcopacy in that country was already in point of fact, in consequence no doubt of Leighton's exertions, reduced almost as low as the nature of an episcopal church could admit.

"After the King's restoration, when bishops were re-established, none were admitted into the ministry but by episcopal ordination: though every bishop did not use the same form, yet none of them (except Bishop Mitchel) imposed what was called reordination on such as had been ordained otherwise, though they did not refuse it to such as desired it. They enjoined no form of public prayer, except the Lord's prayer; but left every minister to his own liberty both in common, as well as occasional, worship, and administration of the sacraments; they enjoined no habits, (that was left to the King's disposal,) though they generally wore black gowns and bands: they had no godfathers and godmothers, nor the cross in baptism; they required no ring in marriage, nor genuflexion in the eucharist, unless the communicant pleased. They did not demand subscription to the old and first confession of the reformers, but connived at the Westminster confession and catechisms; they enjoined no holidays, and observed but few. For the exercise of discipline they had synods, and also presbyteries; where candidates for orders and institution were examined; who also had cognizance of all ecclesiastical cases, under the inspection and review of the diocesan. There were very few sinecures; they knew nothing of pluralities, and very little of non-residence. No lay elders were admitted, but in every parish the minister chose several of the most noted inhabitants, like a select vestry, to assist him in parochial discipline, which in effect were as ruling elders, though not admitted as, or allowed to be, gospel officers. So indulgent were the governors and other great men, that in many parishes presbyterian ministers (if they would but pray for the King, which divers of them would not do) were allowed to officiate in the churches, and receive the whole profits, without being any ways accountable to the Bishop, or ecclesiastic establishment, on any score whatsoever."

fatigued with speaking, replied at considerable length; either controverting the facts asserted, or impeaching the conclusions drawn from them*. In the course of the debate, which was very wearing to mind and body, the Archbishop's nose began to bleed; and this incident was matter of some exultation to his adversaries, who attributed it to the hard blows he had received in the theological combat. Whether they had any better grounds for chanting a pæan, it is not our present business to inquire. Nothing, however, was effected towards the establishment of peace. Both parties claimed the victory in argument; and not a step was taken by the presbyterians to meet the episcopalians, who carried home nothing but humiliation, after going more than half-way to embrace their froward and ungracious brethren.

At the close of this conference, which Leighton had industriously brought about, in hopes of giving such a turn to the temper of the nonconformists as might have a kindly influence on their final decision, he gave them in writing the propositions, which had before been only verbally communicated. It was not without reluctance that he committed them to paper; and it is easy to conjecture the bad consequences he might apprehend from such an instrument being divulged. Among others, it would tend to circumscribe the concessions he could make to the covenanters, and would straiten him in the exercise of that discretionary power, with which he was apparently intrusted. To proclaim the

* See Burnet's Vindication &c., Fourth Conference.

meditated extent of the royal liberality, was in fact to lay a restraint upon it; since it could not well overpass the limit it had publickly prescribed to itself, without incurring the disgrace of having been forced beyond its spontaneous issue. However, it was impossible for Leighton to refuse the demand, without falling under the suspicion, which would have been fatal to his further proceedings, that he was designedly leaving open a way of retreat from the performance of extorted promises. On taking leave of the ministers, he requested them to lose no time in preparing a final answer, as one would in all probability be called for by the end of January.

The meeting took place accordingly at the house of Lord Rothes, where this tedious treaty was concluded by Hutchinson, in the name of the whole fraternity, returning this "short and dry answer," as Leighton designates it; "We are not free in conscience to close with the propositions made by the Bishop of Dunblane, as satisfactory." Leighton begged for an explicit statement of their reasons for persisting in a course so contrary to the peace and welfare of the church; but the presbyterian representatives excused themselves from all argument on the subject. Being requested to submit propositions, on their part, which might furnish a hopeful basis for a fresh negotiation, they declined the invitation, on the plea that their sentiments were already before the world; thereby signifying that nothing would satisfy them, short of the utter extinction of episcopacy. The Archbishop, perceiving that no terms would be accepted by this untractable race, de-

livered himself, before the assembly broke up, at considerable length and with energetic solemnity. He unfolded the motives by which he had been actuated in setting afloat this negotiation, and in still urging it forward, when wave upon wave was driving it back. "My sole object has been to procure peace, and to advance the interests of true religion. In following up this object, I have made several proposals, which I am fully sensible involved great diminutions of the just rights of episcopacy. Yet, since all church power is intended for edification, and not for destruction, I thought that, in our present circumstances, episcopacy might do more for the prosperity of Christ's kingdom by relaxing some of its just pretensions, than it could by keeping hold of all its rightful authority. It is not from any mistrust of the soundness of our cause, that I have offered these abatements; for I am well convinced that episcopacy has subsisted from the apostolic age of the church. Perhaps I may have wronged my own order in making such large concessions: but the unerring discerner of hearts will justify my motives; and I hope ere long to stand excused with my own brethren. You have thought fit to reject our overtures, without assigning any reason for the rejection, and without suggesting any healing measures in the room of ours. The continuance of the divisions, through which religion languishes, must consequently lie at your door. Before God and man I wash my hands of whatever evils may result from the rupture of this treaty. I have done my utmost to repair the temple of the Lord; and my sorrow will not be embittered by compunction, should a

flood of miseries hereafter rush in through the gap you have refused to assist me in closing."

Thus did the bark unhappily founder, which was freighted with the treasures of religious peace and concord. It was not assuredly owing to unskilful pilotage, for nothing could surpass the prudence, knowledge, and fortitude displayed by the apostolic man who was seated at the helm. But the vessel was not equally happy in all who had a share in its management; and it had to contend with such a current of national feelings, of selfish passions, and religious enthusiasm, as was only to be counteracted by perfect harmony in counsel and action. Nothing can be conceived more frank and magnanimous, than the conduct of Leighton throughout his transactions with the dissentient clergy. In his own account of the Accommodation, the extent of his offers is thus stated.

"It was declared to them, that the difference betwixt us should be freely referred to the Scriptures first of all, and next to the judgment and practice of the primitive church; and to the whole catholic christian church in succeeding ages, and to the most famous and most leading persons of the late Reformation, as Calvin, Luther, Melancthon; yea, and to the reformed churches abroad, even to those that at present have no bishops; and last of all to the presbyterians of England; and that if from all these, or any of these, they could justify their continuing divided, even after these offers made, then it should be yielded to them as a thing reasonable. Yea, the person that propounded this further offered them, that if, before

the noble and judicious persons then present, or that should be present at the time of such a conference, they should produce strong and clear reasons for their opinion and practice in this point of difference, as now it stands qualified, he would forthwith resign his present station, and become their proselyte, and would unite and act with them, and if he were called to it, would suffer with them *."

It sometimes happens that measures which owed their birth to a dangerous crisis, and at the moment were highly beneficial, are converted into enormous evils by the folly which forbids them to expire with the crisis; as if what had proved useful as a temporary expedient, must needs be salutary as a permanent institution. It is strangely forgotten that the drug which is a valuable specific for particular diseases would make a very bad article of diet; and that nothing can be worse suited for domestic dress than the coat of mail, although it is of excellent service in the field of battle. That notable compact, the League and Covenant, affords a specimen of this mischievous error. Notwithstanding it contained some very objectionable clauses, it was at its rise of real utility, in shielding the protestant confederacy from the revenge of the discomfited papists. But the terrible objurations within which it was intrenched for the purpose of securing its immortality, and which went to bind it on future generations, changed it into a snare and a pest, into a nurse of strife and sedition; and into a barrier against

* Wodrow MSS., Vol. xxxiv., 4to., Art, 15.

peace the moment it ceased to be a bond of concord. This it was that defeated all the pacific endeavours of Leighton. After he had proved, that no rule of scripture forbids the appointment of a bishop to be the constant president in synods ;—that the fixed presidency of the bishops in synods has as good warrant as the fixed moderating of a presbyter in Kirk sessions, and of ruling Elders ;—that the New Testament no where enjoins, directly or by implication, a parity of presbyters, but seems favourable to a regular subordination of ecclesiastical offices ;—that neither the name of bishop, as conferred on the superior presbyter, nor yet the manner of consecrating him to his office, can be offensive to soberminded christians ;—and that, while the degree of authority vested in the bishops varied with varying circumstances, yet some such special and preeminent power as was now claimed, *exors quædam atque eminens potestas*, appeared from the annals of the primitive church, and the canons of the most ancient councils, to have always lodged with certain individuals :—when Leighton had proved all this by reasonings with which it was hard to grapple, the presbyterians took shelter under the solemn oath, which forbad, to use their own expression, "a hoof, or so much as a hair of the Scottish model to be altered." It was vain to allege the illegality of their covenant, and the duty of renouncing an engagement, which must be criminal, if it precluded such alterations as the oracles of God demanded. It was vain to insist, that a door for modification and amendment had been intentionally left open by the very framers of the

covenant. Nothing was to be done with these stiff-necked disputants. The Covenant, the Covenant was the watchword by which party spirit, should it have slackened for a moment, was instantly strung to its original rigour; and the flames of fanaticism, which had been slaked by the mild pathetic eloquence of Leighton, dropping on them "as the gentle rain from heaven," quickly broke out anew, and raged with redoubled and desperate violence.

We have had occasion to expose the punctilious cavillings of the nonconformists. Leighton has left his opinion on record, that the failure of the negotiation was mainly owing to the "interest and affectation of continuing a divided party:" yet he candidly allowed that "they had more honest hearts among them, than strong heads." But, as it would be a great mistake to deny, on the one hand, that a large share of conscientious, disinterested, and high-minded feeling was intermingled with sentiments of a baser leaven, so, on the other hand, it ought not to be dissembled, that the character of most of the episcopalian leaders was far from claiming the esteem and confidence of their opponents. The most ardent promoters of the Accommodation, and among them the King, were men whom it were dotage to imagine under the influence of religious principle; and the whole project was undisguisedly detested by the bench of bishops, and by the mass of the episcopalian clergy. Under these circumstances the jealousy of the covenanters admits of some palliation. They might apprehend that, however sincere Leighton himself was, they still had no guarantee for those stipula-

tions being fulfilled, the execution of which depended on others more than on himself. They might fear that Episcopacy, like the Vishnu of Eastern fable, after winning from their incautious facility just room enough to stand upon, by artfully shrinking itself to a pigmy stature, would forthwith dilate into a giant bulk, touch the heavens with its head and "bestride the narrow world," and tread to the dust that venerable structure within the pale of which it had been rashly admitted. Possessed with these terrors, which they would naturally scruple to acknowledge, and driven back from one position to another by the persevering condescension of Leighton, they were compelled to make a last stand behind pitiful subterfuges. In the mean time, their jealousies and resentments were kept alive by the violences, which were proceeding all round the narrow circle within which the treaty was under discussion. A wise and honest policy would have suspended all severities. It would have hushed the storm of persecution, which was so unpropitious to calm deliberation and amicable convention. But instead of this being done, there came forth, in the very crisis of the negotiation, an atrocious bill against conventicles, contrived to glide harmlessly over the heads of Romanists, but to fall on Protestant nonconformists with deadly violence. This edict was hurried through parliament with such indecent haste, that Leighton was not apprised of it, till the time to oppose it was past. But, true to his manly independence, he expostulated severely upon it with Lord Tweedale, and declared that the whole complexion of it was so contrary to the common rules of

humanity, not to say Christianity, that he was ashamed to mix in council with the contrivers and abettors of such acts.

It would be more curious than useful, to speculate on the probable duration and utility of an ecclesiastical constitution, adjusted to the ideas of the Archbishop of Glasgow. No doubt, in a church connected, as ours is, with the civil government, there would be a tendency in the episcopal part of such a constitution to supplant the presbyterian. Yet might not means be devised for checking encroachments, and for constantly restoring the system, before it had been seriously injured? It may perhaps be permitted to those who think with Leighton, that neither one nor another outward frame of the church is absolutely essential to its integrity and usefulness, to lament that the experiment was not made of so blending the presbyterian with the episcopal economy, as to produce something nearer to the primitive pattern than Christendom now exhibits. To suppose this impossible is to make a supposition which both reason and experience disclaim. There is nothing in simple episcopacy that tends to despotism, beyond what obtains in every other form of government, not excepting forms of the most democratical aspect: nothing beyond what results from that ambitious propensity of our nature, which constitutional barriers may keep down, but which is always labouring upwards. The spirit of domination may be more concentrated and apparent in the Anglican Church, than in the Scottish, without being more abundant and hurtful. The fact is, that in every kind of regimen there are

certain connatural impurities, from which it can never be thoroughly defecated. You may skim for ever, but fresh scum will still be rising, till the liquor is wholly exhausted. Some risk must be run notwithstanding all our safeguards; some feculence remain after all our refining. But it is the triumph of political wisdom to produce, with the smallest risk of the least considerable evils, the largest sum of public benefit. That this praise belongs to episcopacy has often been shown with great cogency of argument; and could that form of polity be in some degree restored to its ancient simplicity, the church might be expected, under its shelter and superintendence, to attain the highest perfection of which an earthly church is capable.

Some observations of Leighton on the faulty state of the Anglican church, though peculiarly applicable to his own times, may even now be pondered with advantage. Bishop Burnet has told us, that he looked on the state of the English church with very melancholy reflections: for, while he fully admitted that, in respect to doctrine and worship and the main part of government, it was the best constituted church in the world, yet, in point of actual administration, it was one of the most defective. In discipline, which he held to be a matter of prime importance, it was, he affirmed, inferior to the corrupt church of Rome itself. He also deplored the hasty and incautious ordination of ministers, whose qualifications for the office had not been ascertained; and he regarded as a portentous evil the insufficiency of many livings for the maintenance of their incumbents, whereby it appears that

some of the clergy in the north of England were driven to keep alehouses, the very men "who should have strenuously endeavoured to keep themselves and others out of them." Nor did the conduct of the spiritual courts in those times escape his severe animadversion.

Leighton's advancement to Glasgow seems not to have dissolved his connexion with his former diocese; and his constant attachment to its clergy is strikingly displayed in the following pastoral letter to the Synod of Dunblane.

Glasgow, April 6, 1671.

Reverend Brethren,

The superadded burden that I have here sits so heavy upon me, that I cannot escape from under it, to be with you at this time, but my heart and desires shall be with you for a blessing from above upon your meeting. I have nothing to recommend to you, but (if you please) to take a review of things formerly agreed upon; and such as you judge most useful, to renew the appointment of putting them in practice; and to add whatsoever further shall occur to your thoughts, that may promote the happy discharge of your ministry, and the good of your people's souls. I know I need not remind you, for I am confident you daily think of it, that the great principle of fidelity, and diligence, and good success, in that great work, is love; and the great spring of love to souls, i love to Him that bought them. He knew it well himself; and gave us to know it, when he said, "Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep, feed my lambs." Deep impressions of his blessed name upon our hearts will not fail to produce lively expressions of it, not only in our words and discourses, in private and public, but will make the whole track of our lives to be a true copy and transcript of his holy life. And, if there be within us any sparks of that divine love, you know

the best way not only to preserve them, but to excite them, and blow them up into a flame, is by the breath of prayer. Oh prayer! the converse of the soul with God, the breath of God in man returning to its original, frequent, and fervent prayer, the better half of our whole work, and that which makes the other half lively and effectual: as that holy company tells us, when appointing deacons to serve the tables, they add, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word." And is it not, brethren, our unspeakable advantage, beyond all the gainful and honourable employments of the world, that the whole work of our particular calling is a kind of living in heaven, and besides its tendency to the saving of the souls of others, is all along so proper and adapted to the purifying and saving of our own? But you will possibly say, what does he himself that speaks these things unto us? Alas! I am ashamed to tell you. All I dare say is this: I think I see the beauty of holiness, and am enamoured with it, though I attain it not; and how little soever I attain, would rather live and die in the pursuit of it, than in the pursuit, yea, or in the possession and enjoyment, though unpursued, of all the advantages that this world affords. And I trust, dear brethren, you are of the same opinion, and have the same desire and design, and follow it both more diligently, and with better success. But I will stop here, lest I should forget myself, and possibly run on till I have wearied you, if I have not done that already: and yet if it be so, I will hope for easy pardon at your hands, as of a fault I have not been accustomed to heretofore, nor am likely hereafter often to commit. To the all-powerful grace of our great Lord and Master, I recommend you, and your flocks, and your whole work amongst them: and do earnestly entreat your prayers for

Your unworthiest, but most affectionate,
Brother and Servant,
R. Leighton.

Some time after the negotiation with the nonconformists had gone off, Leighton was required by a royal mandate to assist the Lords of the Council in nominating proper men to four vacant sees. Nairn, Charteris, and Burnet, were the persons he fixed upon to fill three of them; and he was seriously distressed to find these clergymen resolute in rejecting the appointment. At first he was disposed not to recommend any others, since those whom he considered most eligible had refused to bring their shoulder under the burden. But, on mature consideration, he thought it his duty rather to present the best qualified persons who could be induced to undertake it, than to leave the appointment in hands little apt to administer power to the advantage of true religion.

Another feeble attempt was made by the Duke of Lauderdale, in the year 1672, to reduce the turbulence of the covenanters, by executing the measure, that Burnet had long before suggested, of placing the discarded ministers in parishes by couples. The Archbishop of Glasgow had already expressed his approbation of this scheme, aptly comparing it to "gathering into the chimney, where they might burn safely, the coals that were scattered over the house and setting it all on fire." The time, however, for suppressing the spirit of recusancy was gone by. Dissent was now exasperated into faction; and had the times been more favourable, it would still have required a hand less wayward and inconstant than Lauderdale's, to impress a new form on the stubborn soul of presbyterianism.

Leighton now considered his work finished; and began to think again of withdrawing from a post, his continuance in which seemed useless to the church. While he had made no way with the nonconformists by his earnest, his affectionate, and it might almost be said his humiliating advances, we have seen that his colleagues were ready to brand him with treachery to their cause, and more than insinuated that he plotted the overthrow of the constitution. The indulged ministers, also, and some of the others, among whom was one Robert Law, from whose memorials I have collected the fact, occasioned him much uneasiness by their disorderly and seditious proceedings; and indeed by actual immoralities, which went to such a length, that he was obliged, in December 1673, to send a deputation, with a formal complaint against them to the Privy Council. All these crosses and disappointments were regarded by Leighton, as so many providential intimations to relinquish an employment wherein he was doing no service to the church, while sacrificing all his personal comfort. Anguish was drinking up his spirit, without benefit to the cause of religion. Accordingly, he rigorously canvassed the legality of abdicating his office: he found out several instances of Bishops who had taken that step, and gone into retirement; and at length he fully satisfied himself that the law of God did not require him to retain his bishopric, when the business of it was but to consume its revenues in stately indolence. On scrutinizing his own heart, he could not perceive that he was prompted to this measure by

successive disgusts, by impatience of the cross, by wounded pride, by secret indignation at Providence, or by his natural propensity to a quiet, studious and contemplative privacy. Was it not a duty rather than a fault, to renounce a position of anxious dignity, and barren of usefulness, for one more favourable to prayer and meditation, to communion with God, and to preparation for eternity? He was now growing old and infirm: he had need to respire from overwhelming fatigues; and well could he adopt for his motto the sentence of Buchanan, "*Senectute fractus, portum exoptans.*" The dressing and undressing of his soul, as he used to call devotional exercises, was the business to which his few remaining days ought to be consecrated; and he "longed to escape, if only into the air among the birds," from the ungrateful service which he had not declined, when summoned to it by the exigencies of the church; but from which he held himself discharged, now that it was become evident that no good could result from his remaining in it.

We can hardly doubt that Leighton had been long looking out for the moment, when he might indulge, without violence to his conscience, his disposition to seclusion from the world. The following letter to his sister, Mrs. Lightmaker, apparently in the latter part of his episcopacy, lets us into his feelings on this subject.

DEAR SISTER,

I was strangely surprised to see the bearer here. What could occasion it I do not yet understand. At parting he ear-

nestly desired a line to you, which without his desire my own affection would have carried me to, if I knew what to say but what I trust you do: and 'tis, that our joint business is to die daily to this world and self, that what little remains of our life we may live to Him that died for us. For myself, to what purpose is it to tell you, what the bearer can, that I grow old and sickly; and though I have here great retirement, as great and possibly greater than I could readily find any where else, yet I am still panting after a retreat from this place and all public charge, and next to rest in the grave. It is the pressingest desire I have of any thing in this world; and, if it might be, with you or near you. But our heavenly Father, we quietly resigning all to him, both knows and will do what is best. Remember my kindest affection to your son and daughter and to Mr. Siderfin, and pray for

Your poor weary brother,

Dunblane, April 19th. R. L.

This letter is dated from Dunblane, where he seems to have mostly resided, after the treaty of accommodation came to nothing. In this retreat, to which he was very partial, there is still in existence a shady avenue, called "the Bishop's walk;" a name which it acquired from his practice of pacing up and down it, when he wished to combine bodily exercise with spiritual meditation. Of the reverence which embalms his memory, there is a yet more striking instance in a carved mitre remaining over the library of his books in Dunblane;—a solitary instance, it is believed, of such a symbol being allowed to exist in Scotland. It was probably from this place that he issued the following apostolic charge to the Synod of Glasgow, which he met for the last time on the eighth day of the following December.

Letter to the Synod of Glasgow, convened April 1673.

Reverend Brethren,

It is neither a matter of much importance, nor can I yet give you a particular and satisfying account of the reasons of my absence from your meeting, which I trust, with the help of a little time, will clear itself: but I can assure you, I am present with you in my most affectionate wishes of the gracious presence of that Holy Spirit amongst you, and within you all, who alone can make this and all your meetings, and the whole work of your ministry, happy and successful, to the good of souls, and His glory that bought them with his own blood. And I doubt not, that your own great desire, each for yourself, and all for one another, is the same; and that your daily and great employment is, by incessant and fervent prayer, to draw down from above large supplies and increases of that blessed Spirit, which our Lord and master hath assured us that our heavenly Father will not fail to give to them that ask it. And how extreme a negligence and folly were it to want so rich a gift for want of asking, especially in those devoted to so high and holy a service, that requires so great degrees of that spirit of holiness and Divine love to purify their minds, and to raise them above their senses and this present world! Oh! my dear Brethren, what are we doing, that suffer our souls to creep and grovel on this earth, and do so little aspire to the heavenly life of christians, and more eminently of the messengers and ministers of God, as stars, yea, as angels, which he hath made spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire! Oh! where are souls to be found amongst us, that represent their own original, that are possessed with pure and sublime apprehensions of God, the Father of spirits, and are often raised to the astonishing contemplation of his eternal and blessed being, and his infinite holiness and greatness and goodness; and are accordingly

burnt up with ardent love! And where that holy fire is wanting, there can be no sacrifice, whatsoever our invention, or utterance, or gifts may be, and how blameless soever the externals of our life may be, and even our hearts free from gross pollutions; for it is scarce to be suspected, that any of us will suffer any of those strange, yea, infernal fires of ambition, or avarice, or malice, or impure lusts and sensualities, to burn within us, which would render us priests of idols, of airy nothings, and of dunghill gods, yea, of the very god of this world—the prince of darkness. Let men judge us and revile us as they please, that imports nothing at all; but God forbid any thing should possess our hearts but He that loved us, and gave himself for us; for we know we cannot be vessels of honour meet for the Master's use, unless we purge ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and empty our hearts of all things beside him, and even of ourselves and our own will, and have no more any desires nor delights, but his will alone, and his glory, who is our peace, and our life, and our all. And, truly, I think it were our best and wisest reflection upon the many difficulties and discouragements without us, to be driven by them to live more within; as they observe of the bees, that when it is foul weather abroad, they are busy in their hives. If the power of external discipline be enervated in our hands, yet, who can hinder us to try, and judge, and censure ourselves; and to purge the inner temples, our own hearts, with the more severity and exactness? And if we be dashed and bespattered with reproaches abroad, to study to be the cleaner at home; and the less we find of meekness and charity in the world about us, to preserve so much the more of that sweet temper within our own hearts; blessing them that curse us, and praying for them that persecute us; so shall we most effectually prove ourselves to be the children of our heavenly Father, even to their conviction that will scarce allow us, in any sense, to be called his servants.

As for the confusions and contentions that still abound and

increase in this Church, and threaten to undo it, I think our wisdom shall be, to cease from man, and look for no help till we look more upwards, and dispute and discourse less, and fast and pray more; and so draw down our relief from the God of order and peace, who made the heavens and the earth.

Concerning myself, I have nothing to say, but humbly to entreat you to pass by the many failings and weaknesses you may have perceived in me during my abode amongst you; and if in any thing I have injured or offended you, or any of you, in the management of my public charge, or in private converse, I do sincerely beg your pardon: though, I confess, I cannot make any requital in that kind; for I do not know of any thing towards me, from any of you, that needs a pardon in the least; having generally paid me more kindness and respect, than a much better or wiser man could either have expected or deserved. Nor am I only a suitor for your pardon, but for the addition of a further charity, and that so great a one, that I have nothing to plead for it, but that I need it much,—your prayers. And I am hopeful as to that, to make you some little, though very disproportioned return; for whatsoever becomes of me, (through the help of God,) while I live, you shall be no one day of my life forgotten by

Your most unworthy, but most affectionate,
Brother and Servant,
R. Leighton.

P. S. I do not see whom it can offend, or how any shall disapprove of it, if you will appoint a fast throughout your bounds, to entreat a blessing on the seed committed to the ground, and for the other grave causes that are still the same as they were the last year, and the urgency of them no whit abated, but rather increased: but in this I prescribe nothing, but leave it to your discretion, and the direction of God.

The account is brief, which Burnet has given, of

the last steps of this holy man's episcopal career. He repaired to court, and there tendered to Lauderdale the resignation of his dignities. At first the Duke resolutely opposed this motion, but was at last prevailed upon to obtain the King's consent in writing for the Archbishop's retirement at the expiration of a year, if his own mind should not have undergone a change within that period, as Lauderdale expected would be the case. The following is a copy of the royal engagement.

"CHARLES R.

"It is our will and pleasure, that the present Archbishop of Glasgow do continue in that station for one whole year; and we shall allow liberty to him to retire from thence at the end of that time.

"Given at our Court, at Whitehall, the Ninth day of August, 1673; and of our Reign, the Twenty-fifth Year. By his Majesty's command."

Having gained this point, Leighton went back delighted, and observed to Burnet, that "there was now but one uneasy stage between him and rest, and he would wrestle through it the best he could." Accordingly, no sooner was the year completed, than he hastened up to London, and laid down his archbishopric, which was restored to its former possessor Dr. Alexander Burnet. After his resignation, he resided for a short time in the College of Edinburgh: whence he retired to Broadhurst, a demesne in the parish of Horsted Keynes, Sussex, belonging to his sister, the

widow of Edward Lightmaker, Esq.; and with her he continued till his death.

The slightest notice is more, perhaps, than ought to be bestowed on the account which Robert Law has penned of the transaction just narrated; since to those who have the least acquaintance with Leighton's character, it must appear on the face of it to be an absurd slander. It is pretended, that the Archbishop never meant to descend from his station; but Lauderdale, whom he had offended, persuaded the King to take in good earnest his hypocritical resignation, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of Sir Ellis and other court friends to avert that catastrophe. Thus was the poor Archbishop, as this shameless story-teller would have it believed, overreached in his own craftiness.

Dismissing this contemptible fabrication, and along with it another idle tale, that his object was to exchange his Scotch bishopric for one in England, we may advert to an account which, if not quite correct, yet is probably not quite devoid of truth.

The account is that Leighton, finding his authority in the diocesan synod of Glasgow but weak, while he administered that see under the title of Commendator, procured himself to be elected Archbishop on the 27th of October, 1671; but the Duke of Lauderdale did not ratify the election by the King's letters patent, as is usually done in such cases. Some have supposed that this disgusted Leighton, and determined or hastened his resignation. Lauderdale tried at first to divert him from this step; but when that crafty minister was endangered by a vote of the House of Commons,

it occurred to him that he might gain over the episcopal bench to his side, and thus ward off an impeachment, by making use of Leighton's resignation, which was left in his hands, and by reinstating Burnet *, whose deprivation had given mortal offence to the English Bishops.

It is very credible that Lauderdale was induced by these considerations to accept the resignation, which he would otherwise have steadily refused; however willing, on the score of personal feeling, to be fairly rid of a prelate, who had never stooped to solicit his favour, and seldom appeared at his levees. But this admission will nowise impugn the Archbishop's sincerity in making the tender. The reasons for resigning, which he himself assigned in a paper that has appeared in Bower's History of the University of Edinburgh, will find ready credit with fair and thinking men; inasmuch as they perfectly accord with the general tone of his mind, of his life and conversation. They are the following:—

"Whatsoever others may judge, they that know what passed before my engaging in this charge will not (I believe) impute my retreat from it to levity or unfixedness of mind, considering how often I declared beforehand, both by word and writing, the great suspicions I had that my continuance in it would be very short; neither is it from any sudden passion or sullen discontent that I have now resigned it; nor do I know

* This bishop was translated to St. Andrews, after the assassination of Archbishop Sharp, which took place on the third of May, A. D. 1679, on Magus Moor. He died on the 24th August 1684.

any cause imaginable for any such thing; but the true reasons of my retiring are plainly and briefly these.

"1. The sense I have of the dreadful weight of whatsoever charge of souls, and all kind of spiritual inspection over people, but much more over ministers, and withal of my own extreme unworthiness and unfitness for so high a station in the church; and there is an episcopal act that is above all others formidable to me, the ordaining of ministers.

"2. The continuing and daily increasing divisions and contentions, and many other disorders of this church, and the little or no appearance of their cure for our time; and as little hope, amidst those contentions and disorders, of doing any thing in this station to promote the great design of religion in the hearts and lives of men, which were the only reason of continuing in it, though it were with much pains and reluctance.

"3. The earnest desire I have long had of a retired and private life, which is now much increased by sickliness and old age drawing on, and the sufficient experience I have of the folly and vanity of the world.

"To add any further discourse, a large apology in this matter were to no purpose; but instead of removing other mistakes and misconstructions, would be apt to expose me to one more; for it would look like too much valuing either of myself or of the world's opinion, both which I think I have so much reason to despise."

Of the discourse and employments of this man of

God, during the sequel of his life, we have no complete account. Some few particulars, however, which are mostly gleaned from his nephew's letter to the Bishop of Salisbury, the pen of biography will not be employed amiss in recording.

We have seen that it was his purpose, in divorcing himself from the world, to give up the remnant of his days to secret and tranquil devotion. Having spent his prime in the active duties of his profession, and in the service of his fellow-creatures, he saw no impropriety, but rather a suitableness, in consecrating his declining years more immediately to God; and in making the last stage of earthly existence a season of unintermitted preparation for the scene, upon which he was to enter at the end of his journey. Accordingly he lived in great seclusion; and abstained, to the utmost that charity and courtesy would allow, from giving and receiving visits. Let it not be supposed, however, that he withdrew from ministerial employments. After disburdening himself of the episcopal dignity, he again took to the vocation of a parish minister, and was constantly engaged at Horsted Keynes, or one of the neighbouring churches, in reading prayers or in preaching. In the peasant's cottage, likewise,

——— his tongue dropped manna:

and long after his decease he was talked of by the poor of his village with affectionate reverence. With deep feeling would they recall his divine counsels and consolations; his tenderness in private converse; and the

impressive sanctity, which he carried into the solemnities of public worship.

Leighton was not by nature morose and ascetic : yet something of a cloisteral complexion appears to have been wrought in him by the character of the times, and by the scarcity of men like-minded with himself. He plunged into the solitudes of devotion, with a view to escape from the polluting commerce of the world ; to gain the highest places of sacred contemplation, and to maintain perpetual intercourse with heaven.

That he was no friend to monastic seclusion is certain. He reckoned the greater number of the regular clergy in Roman Catholic countries, to be little better than *ignavi fures,* rapacious drones ; at the same time that he recognised among them a few specimens of extraordinary growth in religion ; and thought he had discovered in the piety of some conventual recluses a peculiar and celestial flavour, which could hardly be met with elsewhere. Of their sublime devotion he often spoke with an admiration approaching to rapture ; and much he wished, that the sons of a purer faith and discipline could match them in that seraphic strength and swiftness of wing, by which they soared to the topmost branches of divine contemplation, to crop the choicest clusters of heavenly fruitage. "It is not," he would say, "the want of religious houses, but of spiritual hearts, that glues the wing of our affections, and hinders the more frequent practice of this leading precept of the divine law,—fervently to lift up our souls unto God, and to have our conversation in heaven." His opinion was that a mixed life, or, as

he beautifully termed it, an angelical life, was the most excellent; a life spent between ascending to fetch blessings from above, and descending to scatter them among mortals. Would christians retreat occasionally from the dizzy whirl of life, and give themselves time to reflect, they might become enamoured of those beauties, which lie above the compass of natural vision on the summit of God's holy mountain. Some of the prelates and fathers of the first ages had, according to his notions, hit the happy medium; and, by mingling pastoral ministrations with devotional retirement, had earned a better meed than is due to the votaries of a severe and unprofitable solitude.

Of the devotion which mingled with his own life, flowing easily from a well-spring of divine love in his soul, it would be hard to speak extravagantly. Prayer and praise were his business and his pleasure. So earnest was his manner of praying that his soul seemed carried up to heaven by the energy of his aspirations. Although none was ever less tainted with a mechanical spirit in religion, yet he denied that the use of written forms put to flight the power of devotion; and he himself occasionally employed them with a fervency and feeling, by which his hearers were powerfully excited. To the Lord's prayer he was particularly partial, and said of it, "Oh, the spirit of this prayer would make rare christians." Considering prayer, fervent, frequent, intercessory prayer, to be a capital part of the clerical office, he would repeat, with great approbation, that apophthegm of a pious bishop; *Necesse est, non ut multùm legamus, sed ut multùm*

oremus. This he looked upon as the vessel which alone draws living water from the well of divine mysteries. Without it he thought the application of the greatest human powers to theology would turn out a laborious vanity: and in support of this opinion he adduced the confession of Erasmus, that when he began to investigate the truths of Revelation, he thought he understood them pretty well; but, after much study of commentators, he was infinitely more perplexed than before. With what a holy emphasis would Leighton exclaim in commenting upon those words of David; "Thou (O God) hast taught me:" "*Non homines, nec consuetudo, nec industria mea, sed tu docuisti.*"

It is not, however, to be imagined that this great prelate, who was himself one of the most learned men of a very learned age, undervalued human erudition. On the contrary, he greatly encouraged it in his clergy; and has been heard to declare, that there could not be too much, if it were but sanctified. But then he set far higher store by real piety; and would remark, with a felicitous introduction of a passage from Seneca; "*Non opus est multis literis ad bonam mentem*, but to be established in grace and replenished with the spirit." Pointing to his books, one day, he said to his nephew, "One devout thought is worth them all;"—meaning, no doubt, that no accumulation of knowledge is of any value in comparison with genuine holiness.

Of his delight in the inspired volume we have ample evidence in his writings, which are beautifully studded with gems extracted from that sacred mine. How would he lament that most people, instead of feeding

upon scriptural verities, instead of ruminating on them leisurely, and prolonging the luxury as skilful epicures would, rather swallowed them down whole like bitter pills, of which the taste is industriously disguised! His French bible, now in the library of Dunblane, is marked in numerous places; and the blank leaves of it are filled with extracts made by his own pen from Jerome, Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, and several other Fathers. But the bible, which he had in daily use, gave yet stronger testimony to his intimate and delightful acquaintance with its contents. With the book of psalms he was particularly conversant, and would sometimes style it, by an elegant application of a scriptural metaphor, "a bundle of myrrh, that ought to lie day and night in the bosom *." "Scarce a line in that sacred psalter (writes his nephew) that hath passed without the stroke of his pencil."

To him the sabbath was a festive day; and he would repair to God's house with a willing spirit when his body was infirm. One rainy Sunday, when almost disabled by illness from going abroad, he still persisted in attending church, and said in excuse for his apparent rashness; "Were the weather fair I would stay at home, but since it is foul I must go; lest I be thought to countenance, by my example, the irreligious practice of letting trivial hindrances keep us back from public worship."

Averse as he was to parade of all kinds, and especially to dizening out religion in modish draperies, yet he was not for shrouding her in a gloomy cowl, nor for exposing her to needless scorn, as he thought the

* Song of Solomon, chap. i. v. 13.

Quakers did, by dressing her with "an hood and bells." It was his wish to see public worship so ordered as to exclude superfluous ornament; while it preserved those sober decencies, which at once protect the majesty of religion, and help to keep awake a devout spirit in the worshipper.

It may have appeared to some of my readers, that Leighton's latitudinarian views on the subject of ecclesiastical polity bordered upon the romantic, and were unsuitable to the present imperfect state of the christian church. But it is due to him not to forget, that he was an inexorable enemy to laxity and disorder; and maintained the necessity of a regular and exact administration of the church, although he was comparatively indifferent about the form of that administration, if it did but ensure a good supply for the religious wants of the people. "The mode of church government," he would say, "is immaterial; but peace and concord, kindness and goodwill, are indispensable. But, alas, I rarely find, in these days, men nerved with a holy resolution to contend for the substance more than for the ceremony; and disposed in weak and indifferent things to be weak and compliant." Among such things he classed those points of discipline on which the dissenters stood out, declaring that "he could not in earnest find them to amount to more."

The religion of this pre-eminent saint was incorporated with the whole frame of his life and conversation. This gave a peculiarity, which was striking and impressive, to many of his ordinary actions. They were the same things which other men did, but they were

done in another manner, and exhibited the shining print of his angelic spirit. So impressively was this the case, that his nephew, when a little child, struck with his reverential manner of saying grace after a meal, observed to his mother, that "his uncle did not give thanks like other folk."

It may be doubted whether Christianity, in the days of its youthful vigour, gave birth to a more finished pattern than Leighton of the love of holiness. It was truly his reigning passion; and his longing to depart hence grew out of an intense desire to be transformed into the divine likeness. "To be content to stay always in this world," he observed "is above the obedience of angels. Those holy spirits are employed according to the perfection of their natures, and restlessness in hymns of praise is their only rest: but the utmost we poor mortals can attain to, is to lie awake in the dark, and a great piece of art and patience it is *spatiosam fallere noctem.*" Often would he bewail the proneness of christians to stop short of that perfection, the pursuit of which is enjoined upon us; and it was his grief to observe, that even good men are content to be "low and stunted vines." The wish nearest his heart was, to attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and all his singularities, for such to our reproach they are, arose from this desire being in him so much more ardent than it is in ordinary christians. In the subjoined letter this habit of mind, this insatiable longing after perfect holiness, is finely portrayed. It was written when he was principal of the University of Edinburgh.

Sir,

Oh! what a weariness is it to live amongst men, and find so few men; and amongst christians, and find so few christians; so much talk and so little action: religion turned almost to a tune and air of words; and amidst all our pretty discourses, pusillanimous and base, and so easily dragged into the mire, self and flesh and pride and passion domineering, while we speak of being in Christ and clothed with him, and believe it, because we speak it so often and so confidently. Well, I know you are not willing to be thus gulled; and having some glances of the beauty of holiness, aim no lower than perfection, which in the end we hope to attain; and in the meanwhile the smallest advances towards it are more worth than crowns and sceptres. I believe it, you often think on these words of the blessed champion Paul, (1 Cor. ix. 24, &c.,) There is a noble guest within us. Oh! let all our business be to entertain him honourably, and to live in celestial love within; that will make all things without be very contemptible in our eyes.—I should rove on did not I stop myself, it falling out well too for that, to be hard upon the post hours ere I thought of writing. Therefore, "good night," is all I add; for whatever hour it comes to your hand, I believe you are as sensible as I that it is still night: but the comfort is, it draws nigh towards that bright morning that shall make amends.

Your weary fellow-pilgrim,

R. L.

It would perhaps be inexpedient for every one to attain such habits of religious abstraction, and to keep as much aloof from the world, as Leighton did in the period of his life we are now reviewing. Indeed, he himself expressed his conviction, that "a thorough practical belief of those things, which we all acknow-

ledge to be true with respect to the eternal world, would hinder us from buying and selling, and interfere with the necessary business of life; or at least, would render it an intolerable drudgery." God is therefore indulgent to our state and condition, in not commonly letting in upon our minds more vivid views of futurity. Nevertheless, it is of vast advantage to have before our eyes some bright instances of saints who have outstripped their competitors, and have gained the summit of the hill up which the train of feebler pilgrims is still painfully toiling. Such extraordinary proficients in the life and power of godliness are the spiritual salt which keeps the world from corruption. They rebuke the slackness of those half-hearted home-sick mariners, who stand off and on, wistfully eyeing the shore from which they have reluctantly parted, instead of at once launching into the deep, and making sail for a better country. They prevent a scandalous depression of the standard of christian piety; they animate the despondent to hope and perseverance; and they prove, with a demonstration which puts to shame the cavils of the sceptic, how superior christian philosophy is in the formation of character to the most elaborate systems of human ethics.

Of the effectual eloquence of Leighton's great example a striking instance is adduced in Mr. Edward Lightmaker's letter. The writer's father, after witnessing the holy and mortified life of this eminent saint, became sensible that a man is in no safe condition for dying, unless he be striving after the highest degrees of piety. "If none shall go to heaven," he

exclaimed, "but so holy a man as this, what will become of me?" Under these impressions he very much withdrew from the world, relinquished a profitable business because of its dangerous entanglements, and made the care of his ultimate felicity his chief occupation.

Such consequences might well be expected to flow from an intimacy with Leighton, for his discourse breathed the spirit of heaven. To no one, perhaps, do the exquisite lines of the Christian poet Cowper more accurately apply :—

> When one that holds communion with the skies
> Has filled his urn where these pure waters rise,
> And once more mingles with us meaner things,
> 'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings;
> Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
> That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.

He seldom discoursed on secular matters without happily and naturally throwing in some spiritual reflections; and it was his professed opinion, that nothing takes off more from the authority of ministers and the efficacy of their message, than a custom of vain and frivolous conversation. Indeed, "he had brought himself into so composed a gravity, (writes his first biographer,) that I never saw him laugh, and but seldom smile; and he kept himself in such a constant recollection, that I do not remember that I ever heard him say one idle word. He seemed to be in a perpetual meditation." Although he was not at all given to sermonize, yet any little incident that fell under his observation would cause some pious sentiment to drop

from him, just as the slightest motion makes a full goblet run over. Meeting a blind beggar one day, he observed, "Methinks this poor sufferer cries out in behalf of the whole human race, as its representative; and let what he so earnestly craves be given him, as readily as God bestows a cure on the spiritually blind who ask it." "It is extremely severe," said his sister to him, speaking of the weather: "But thou, O God, hast made summer and winter," was his devout reply. Some one saying, "You have been to hear a sermon:" "I met a sermon," was his answer, "a sermon *de facto*, for I met a corpse; and rightly and profitably are the funeral rites observed when the living lay it to heart." Thus he endeavoured to gather spiritual good out of every passing circumstance, and to communicate good to others.

In a soul so full of heaven there was little room for earthly attachments. Indeed, the whole tone of his discourse, and the constant tenour of his life, evinced his detachment, not only from pomps and riches and delicacies, but from what are usually esteemed to be common comforts and necessaries. To his judgment the middle condition of life best approved itself. "Better to be in the midst," were his words, "between the two pointed rocks of deep penury and high prosperity, than to be on the sharps of either." But his choice, to quote his own emphatic expression, was to choose nothing, and he left it to a better wisdom than his own to carve out his earthly lot. "If we are born to worldly greatnesses, let us even take them, and endeavour to make friends with them who shall stand us in good

stead, when we are put out of our stewardship: but to desire that our journey should be by the troublesome and dangerous road of worldly prosperity, is a mighty folly." He was pleased with an ingenious similitude of Dr. Sale's, who compares the good things of this life to mushrooms, which need so many precautions in eating, that wholly to waive the dish is the safest wisdom.

To corporeal indulgences none was ever more indifferent. Indeed, he practised a rigid abstemiousness, keeping three fasts in the week, and one of them always on the Sunday, not from a superstitious esteem of the bodily penance, but in order to make the soul light and active for the enjoyment of that sacred festival. His nephew thinks that he injured his health by excessive abstinence: but his own maxim was, that "little eating and little speaking do no one any harm;" and he would say pleasantly when dinner was announced, "Well, since we are condemned to this, let us sit down." His notions of the moderation which Christians ought to exercise at the table, will be generally accounted extravagant. When his sister once invited him to eat of a particular dish, extolling its goodness, he declined it, saying, "What is it good for, but to please a wanton taste? One thing forborne is better than twenty things taken." "But," answered Mrs. Lightmaker, "why were these things bestowed on us?" "To see," he rejoined, "how well we could forbear them;" and then added, "Shall I eat of this delicacy, while a poor man wants his dinner?" He thought people in general much too expensive and curious in the preparation of their meals, and wished this domestic

profusion were turned into a channel of distribution to the poor. Every thing beyond the mere necessaries of life he termed the overflowings of a full cup, which ought not to run to waste, but to descend into the poor man's platter. The gratifications of bodily appetite would not, he was persuaded, be so much reckoned on, if professed christians had more "spiritual sensuality," as he often termed that ardent relish, which is the characteristic of sanctified souls, for the meat and drink, the hidden manna, of God's immortal banquet.

He used to compare a man's station in life to an imprisonment, and observed, that, "although it is right to keep the place of our confinement clean and neat, it were ill done to build upon it." His sister, thinking he carried his indifference to earthly things too far, and that his munificence required some check, said to him once, "If you had a wife and children, you must not act thus." His answer was, "I know not how it would be, but I know how it should be, 'Enoch walked with God;—and begat sons and daughters.'"

In truth, his liberality was boundless. All that he received was transferred to the poor, except the bare pittance which his necessities imperiously demanded for himself. Unwilling, however, to gain any credit for beneficence, he commonly dispensed his bounty through the hands of others, as we learn from Burnet, who officiated as his almoner in London.

In exemplification of his humane and amiable condescension to his friends and dependents, there

is an anecdote which will not disgrace our pages. He once had a Roman Catholic servant, who made a point of abstaining from flesh on the fast days prescribed by the Romish calendar. Leighton, being apprized of this by Mrs. Lightmaker, commented on the vanity of such scruples, yet requested her to indulge the poor man with such fare as suited his erroneous piety, lest the endeavour to dissuade him from the practice should drive him to falsehood or prevarication. "For to this," he added, "many poor creatures are impelled, not so much from a corrupt inclination, as for want of a handsome truth." So gentle was he in his construction of the faults and foibles of others.

It is of little moment to ascertain, even were it possible, whether this be the identical manservant, whose idle pranks have earned him a never-dying fame in Dunblane and its neighbourhood. The following story may be taken as a sample of the provocations with which this thoughtless fellow used to try his master's equanimity. Having a fancy one morning for the diversion of fishing, he locked the door of the house and carried off the key, leaving his master imprisoned. He was too much engrossed with his sport to think of returning till the evening, when the only admonition he received for his egregious misconduct was, "John, when you next go a fishing, remember to leave the key in the door."

The whole tenour of Leighton's life proclaims his abhorrence of persecution. His sister once asked him, at the request of a friend, what he thought

was the mark of the Beast; at the same time adding, "I told the inquirer that you would certainly answer, you could not tell." "Truly you said well," replied Leighton; "but, if I might fancy what it were, it would be something with a pair of horns that pusheth his neighbour, as hath been so much seen and practised in church and state." He also passed a severe sentence on the Romanists, "who, in their zeal for making proselytes, fetched ladders from hell to scale heaven:" and he deeply lamented that men of the reformed church should have given into similar measures.

We have seen, in the narrative of his public conduct, how firmly he withstood the severe measures set on foot to produce an uniformity of worship in Scotland. Swords and halberts, tongs and pincers, were very unfit instruments, in his esteem, for advancing the science and practice of religion. "The scripture tells us, indeed, of plucking out a right eye for the preservation of the whole body; but if that eye admit of a cure, it should rather be preserved; only let its cure be committed to the dexterous hands of the kindest oculist, and not to a mere bungler, who would mar instead of healing. For himself he would suffer any thing, rather than touch a hair of the head of those who laboured under such pitiable maladies as errors in faith must be accounted. Or, if he did meddle with them, it should be with such a gentle touch, as would prove the friendliness of his disposition and purpose." "I prefer," he has been heard to say, "an erroneous honest man before the most orthodox

knave in the world; and I would rather convince a man that he has a soul to save, and induce him to live up to that belief, than bring him over to my opinion in whatsoever else beside. Would to God that men were but as holy as they might be in the worst of forms now among us! Let us press them to be holy, and miscarry if they can." Being told of a person who had changed his persuasion, all he said was, "Is he more meek; more dead to the world? If so, he has made a happy change."

It is related of him, that going one day to visit a leading minister of the presbytery, he found him discoursing to his company on the duties of a holy life. Leighton, instead of turning off to the subject of the current reasons for nonconformity, although he had gone for the express purpose of discussing them, instantly fell in with the train of conversation, and concluded his visit without attempting to change it. To some of his friends who remonstrated with him on this apparent oversight,—"Nay," he replied, "the good man and I were in the main agreed; and for the points in which we differ, they are mostly unimportant; and though they be of moment, it is advisable before pressing any, to win as many volunteers as we can."

This feature of his character is further illustrated by an anecdote, which there is every reason to believe authentic. A friend calling upon him one day, and not meeting him at home, learnt on inquiry that he was gone to visit a sick presbyterian minister on a horse which he had borrowed of the catholic priest.

An interesting anecdote may here find a place, which displays several of Leighton's admirable qualities.

Travelling with a friend in the vicinity of Dunblane, he was suddenly arrested by a cry of distress. On looking towards the quarter from which it came, he saw, at some little distance, a man who implored his assistance, and pointed to another man who was stretched on the ground, apparently in the last agonies. Leighton instantly quitted his carriage and advanced to the spot, when the wretch who seemed at the point of death, but was only feigning, started up from the ground, and joined in robbing the compassionate bishop. Having accomplished their nefarious project, they allowed him to return to his carriage. But hardly had he set off again, when the man he had first encountered came running after him, and conjured him, with the air and voice of distraction, to return to his assistance, as his comrade was indeed expiring. The travellers were naturally suspicious of some new villainy: but observing the genuine terror imprinted on the features of the suppliant, they complied with his request, and on reaching the spot, found the other footpad actually dead,—a monument of the righteous judgment of heaven. Leighton preached a sermon on the occasion.

His sobriety of mind and soundness of judgment ought not to be passed over in silence. These qualities were conspicuous in his never pretending to develope the secret things of God, notwithstanding the variety of his learning and his talent for high speculation. Instead of hazarding a guess on a difficult point

to which he had been requested to turn his thoughts, he said to the inquirer, on meeting him some time afterwards, "I have not yet got the lesson you set me." And to his nephew, who complained that there was a certain text of scripture which he could not understand, his answer was, "And many more that I cannot." In reverently standing aloof from those mysteries of the divine nature and government, which are enshrined in a light no mortal eye can gaze upon undazzled, he discovered a judgment equal to his modesty, and exemplified the saying of Solomon, that "with the lowly is wisdom." Being once interrogated about the saints reigning with Christ, he tried to elude the question by merely replying, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Pressed, however, to give his opinion, whether the saints would exercise rule in the earth, although Christ should not in person assume the sovereignty, he answered with exquisite judgment, "If God hath appointed any such thing for us, he will give us heads to bear such liquor: our preferment shall not make us reel." Prying into matters of this nature, which the spirit of God has apparently sealed up from man's inquisitiveness, was in his estimation indecent and dangerous; and he thought that passionate curiosity which overleaps the boundaries of revelation might be well rebuked by the angel's answer to Manoah, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" "Enough," he said, "is discovered to satisfy us, that righteousness and judgment are within, although round about his throne are clouds and darkness:" and he blamed those

"who boldly venture into the very thick darkness and deepest recesses of the divine majesty." "That prospect of election and predestination," said he, "is a great abyss, into which I choose to sink, rather than attempt to sound it. And truly any attempt at throwing light upon it makes it only a greater abyss, and is a piece of blameable presumption." In conformity with these sound views, he always endeavoured, when Principal of the University of Edinburgh, to repress such perilous inquiries; judging them of a nature to make young students conceited, disputatious, and sceptical, and to lead them away from the love of truth and the practice of piety.

How discreet and tender a counsellor he was to persons labouring under religious doubts and perplexities, the two following letters bear witness. The first of these is to a lady of quality to whom he was personally unknown, but who seems to have sought his advice through the intervention of a common friend.

MADAM,

Though I have not the honour to be acquainted with your Ladyship, yet a friend of yours has acquainted me with your condition, though, I confess, the unfittest of all men to minister any thing of spiritual relief to any person, either by prayer or advice to you; but he could have imparted such a thing to none of greater secrecy, and withal of greater sympathy and tender compassion towards such as are exercised with those kind of conflicts; as, having been formerly acquainted with the like myself, all sorts of sceptical and doubtful thoughts, touching those great points having not only past through my head, but some of them have for some time sat more fast and

painfully upon my mind; but in the name of the Lord they were at length quite dispelled and scattered. And oh! that I could love and bless Him, who is my deliverer and strength, my rock and fortress, where I have now found safety from these incursions; and I am very confident you shall shortly find the same; only wait patiently on the Lord, and hope in him, for you shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance; and it is that alone that can enlighten you, and clear your mind of all those fogs and mists that now possess it, and calm the storms that are raised within it. You do well to read good books that are proper for your help, but rather the shortest and plainest, than the more tedious and voluminous, that sometimes entangle a perplexed mind yet more, by grasping many more questions, and answers, and arguments than is needful: but, above all, still cleave to the incomparable spring of light and divine comfort, the Holy Scriptures, even in despite of all doubts concerning them. And when you find your thoughts in disorder and at a loss, entertain no dispute with them by any means at that time, but rather divert from them to short prayer, or to other thoughts, and sometimes to well chosen company, or the best you can have where you are; and at some other time, when you find yourself in a calmer and serener temper, and upon the vantage ground of a little more confidence in God, then you may resume your reasons against unbelief, yet so as to beware of casting yourself into new disturbance. For when your mind is in a sober temper, there is nothing so suitable to its strongest reason, nothing so wise and noble as religion; and to believe it is so rational, that, as now I am framed, I am afraid that my belief proceeds too much from reason, and is not so divine and spiritual as I would have it; only when I find (as in some measure through the grace of God I do) that it hath some real virtue and influence upon my affections and track of life, I hope there is somewhat of a higher tincture in it. But in point of reason, I am well assured that all that I have heard from the

wittiest atheists and libertines in the world, is nothing but bold ravery and madness, and their whole discourse a heap of folly and ridiculous nonsense. For what probable account can they give of the wonderful frame of the visible world, without the supposition of an eternal and infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness that formed it, and themselves, and all things in it? And what can they think of the many thousands of martyrs in the first age of christianity, that endured not simple death, but all the inventions of the most exquisite tortures, for their belief of that most holy faith, which if the miracles that confirmed it had not persuaded them so, they themselves had been thought the most prodigious miracles of madness in all the world? It is not want of reason on the side of religion that makes fools disbelieve it, but the interest of their brutish lusts and dissolute lives makes them wish it were not true: and there is this vast difference betwixt you and them; they would gladly believe less than they do, and you would also gladly believe more than they do: they are sometimes pained and tormented with apprehensions that the doctrine of religion is, or may be, true; and you are perplexed with suggestions to doubt of it, which are to you as unwilling and unwelcome, as these apprehensions of its truth are to them. Believe it, Madam, these different thoughts of yours are not yours, but his that inserts them, and throws them as fiery darts into your mind, and they shall assuredly be laid to his charge, and not to yours. Think you that infinite goodness is ready to take advantage of his poor creatures, and to reject and condemn those, that, against all the assaults made upon them, desire to keep their heart for him, and to acknowledge him, and to love him and live to him. He made us, and knows our mould, and as a father pities his children pities them that fear him; for he is their father and the tenderest and kindest of all fathers; and, as a father pities his child when it is sick, and in the rage and ravery of a fever, though it even utter reproachful words against himself, shall not our dearest father both forgive and pity those thoughts in

any child of his, that arise not from any wilful hatred of him, but are kindled in hell within them? And no temptation hath befallen you in this, but that which has been incident to men, and to the best of men; and their heavenly father hath not only forgiven them, but in due time hath given them an happy issue out of them, and so he will assuredly do to you. In the mean time, when these assaults come thickest and violentest upon you, throw yourself down at his footstool, and say; "O God, father of mercies, save me from this hell within me. I acknowledge, I adore, I bless thee, whose throne is in heaven, with thy blessed Son and crucified Jesus, and thy Holy Spirit, and also, though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee: but I cannot think thou canst hate and reject a poor soul that desires to love thee, and cleave to thee, so long as I can hold by the skirts of thy garment until thou violently shake me off, which I am confident thou wouldst not do, because thou art love and goodness itself, and thy mercies endure for ever." Thus, or in what other frame your soul shall be carried to vent itself into his bosom, be assured, your words, yea, your silent sighs and breathings shall not be lost, but shall have a most powerful voice and ascend into his ear, and shall return to you with messages of peace and love in due time, and, in the mean time, with secret supports, that you faint not, nor sink in these deeps that threaten to swallow you up. But I have wearied you, instead of refreshing you. I will add no more, but that the poor prayers of one of the unworthiest caitiffs in the world, such as they be, shall not be wanting on your behalf, and he begs a share in yours; for neither you, nor any in the world, need that charity more than he does. Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.

The next is to some christian friend, whose name is unknown.

CHRISTIAN FRIEND,

Though I had very little vacant time for it, yet I would have seen you, if I could have presumed it might have been any way useful for the quieting of your mind. However, since I heard of your condition, I cease not daily, as I can, to present it to him, who alone can effectually speak peace to your heart; and I am confident, in due time, will do so. It is he that stilleth the raging of the sea; and by a word can turn the violentest storm into a great calm. What the particular thoughts or temptations are that disquiet you, I know not; but whatsoever they are, look above them and labour to fix your eye on that infinite goodness, which never faileth them that by naked faith do absolutely rely and rest upon it, and patiently wait upon him, who hath pronounced them all, without exception, blessed that do so. Say often within your own heart; Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: and if, after some intervals, your troubled thoughts do return, check them still with the holy Psalmist's words; Why art thou cast down, O my soul, &c. If you can thoroughly sink yourself down, through your own nothingness, into him who is all, and entirely renouncing your own will, embrace that blest and holy will in all things, there I am sure you shall find that rest, which all your own distempers, and all the powers of darkness shall not be able to deprive you of. I incline not to multiply words; and indeed other advice than this I have none to give you. The Lord of peace, by the sprinkling of the blood of his Son Jesus and the sweet breathings of the great Comforter, his own Holy Spirit, give you peace in himself. Amen.

We learn from Burnet, that "his thoughts were lively, oft out of the way and surprising, yet just and genuine;" and several of his sayings might be adduced to justify this praise, and to show him well read in the science and management of human nature. It

was an aphorism of his, that "One half of the world lives upon the madness of the other." He well knew, writes his nephew, when it was expedient to be silent, and when it behoved him to speak :—a knowledge not less rare than valuable. One of his favourite axioms was, that "All things operate according to the disposition of the subject;" and he was of opinion, that the silence of a good man will sometimes convey a more effectual lesson than his discourse. Two things, he observed, are commonly requisite to make religious advice salutary, namely, time and judgment; and he thought the following maxim might often be remembered with advantage,—*philosophandum, sed paucis.* Accordingly he was quite against jading hearers with discourses beyond the measure of their understanding, or their patience: "for it is better," said he, "to send them home still hungry than surfeited." He was no advocate in general for crude and abrupt exposures of unpalatable truths. Being told of an author, who had entitled his performance, "Naked Truth whipt and stript," his remark was, "It might have been better to clothe it:" and he saw nothing praiseworthy in the roughness, misnamed honesty, of some people, "who would rather overturn the boat than trim it." I shall only add, in illustration of this point of his character, a prayer he used to offer up, which is pregnant with melancholy meaning: "Deliver me, O Lord, from the errors of wise men; yea, and of good men."

Of his humility, that grace so lovely in the eyes of heaven, and which was truly his crowning grace, it would be difficult to take the dimensions. Burnet

says, that "he seemed to have the lowest thoughts of himself possible, and to desire that all other persons should think as meanly of him as he did of himself; and he bore all sorts of ill usage and reproach, like a man that took pleasure in it."

This character of his mind is finely displayed in the following passage from one of his letters.

And now I have begun, I would end just here; for I have nothing to say, nothing of affairs (to be sure) private nor public; and to strike up to discourses of devotion, alas! what is there to be said, but what you sufficiently know, and daily read, and daily think, and, I am confident, daily endeavour to do? And I am beaten back, if I had a great mind to speak of such things, by the sense of so great deficiency, in doing those things that the most ignorant among christians cannot choose but know. Instead of all fine notions, I fly to Κύριε ἐλέησον, Χριστὲ ἐλέησον. I think them the great heroes and excellent persons of the world, that attain to high degrees of pure contemplation and divine love; but next to those, them that in aspiring to that and falling short of it, fall down into deep humility, and self-contempt, and a real desire to be despised and trampled on by all the world. And I believe that they that sink lowest into that depth, stand nearest to advancement to those other heights: for the great King, who is the fountain of that honour, hath given us this character of himself, that He resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Farewell, my dear Friend, and be so charitable as sometimes in your addresses upwards, to remember a poor caitiff, who no day forgets you. R. L.

13th December, 1676.

On the eve of taking a bishopric, when he perceived how many obstacles existed to his doing the good he

wished to others, "Yet one benefit at least," said he, "will arise from it; I shall break that little idol of estimation my friends have for me, and which I have been so long sick of." Though he could not be ignorant of the value set on his pulpit discourses by the public—for never was a wandering eye seen when he preached, but the whole congregation would often melt into tears before him,—yet the most urgent entreaties of his friends could never obtain from him the publication of a single sermon. Indeed, he looked upon himself as so ordinary a preacher, and so little calculated to do good, that he was always for giving up his place to other ministers; and after he became a bishop, he preferred preaching to small congregations, and would never give notice beforehand when he was to occupy the pulpit. Of a piece with his rooted dislike to any thing that seemed to imply consequence in himself, was his strong objection to have his portrait drawn. When it was requested of him, he testified unusual displeasure and said, "If you will have my picture, draw it with charcoal," meaning, no doubt, that he was *carbone notandus,* as justly obnoxious to scorn and condemnation. His likeness was, however, clandestinely taken, when he was about the middle age; and as the engravings prefixed to this edition of his works are copied from it, it is gratifying to know from such good authority as his nephew's letter, that it greatly resembled him.

Leighton was never married, but a tradition exists of an amusing attempt that was made to deprive him of the meed of celibacy. One day, when pacing his shady walk, he was accosted by a lady, who, with some

appearance of embarrassment, and many apologies for the intrusion, trusting that he would ascribe to an imperious sense of duty, and not to indelicate forwardness, the communication she was about to make, informed him that in a dream, which she was thoroughly satisfied came from heaven, he had been announced to her as her future husband. Of course it remained for his Lordship to exercise his own judgment on this extraordinary occurrence; but her conscience would not have acquitted her of disobedience to the heavenly admonition, had she suffered herself to be restrained from making the disclosure by female bashfulness, or the fear of reproach or ridicule. The Bishop listened with the utmost courteousness, and then, with his wonted suavity of manner, not unmixed with a little of that archness which agreeably tinctured his character, he assured her that he gave her full credit for conscientious motives. Still, since marriage was a very serious affair, and the dream she had related might possibly have less in it of inspiration than she imagined, it struck him that the best way of proceeding would be to wait a little, and see whether a similar communication were vouchsafed to him, in which case it must indeed be regarded as a divine command, demanding the most dutiful attention *.

But though he adhered to a single life, it is certain that nature had endowed him with a warm and affectionate disposition, which was not extinguished by his superlative love to God, though it was always kept in

* This anecdote, and that of the robbers, were communicated to me by the late excellent and reverend Mr. Legh Richmond, who obtained them at Dunblane, and considered them well authenticated.

due subordination. In his commentary on the epistle of Peter he remarks, that "our only safest way is to gird up our affections wholly;" and he lived up to this principle. Accordingly, after avowing a strong predilection for the amiable character and fine accomplishments of a relation, he added, "nevertheless I can readily wean myself from him, if I cannot persuade him to become wise and good: *Sine bonitate nulla majestas, nullus sapor.*" To him, as to that Holy One, of whose spirit he largely partook, whoever did the will of his heavenly Father were more than natural kindred. Such, therefore, of his relations as were christians indeed had a double share of his tenderness; and to the strength of this two-fold bond, not less than to his heavenly-mindedness, we may ascribe his exclamation on returning from the grave in which his brother-in-law had been interred: "Fain would I have thrown myself in with him." An extract from a letter which he wrote to that gentleman on the death of a sweet and promising child is exquisitely touching, and discovers the genuine tenderness of his disposition.

I am glad of your health and recovery of your little ones; but indeed it was a sharp stroke of a pen, that told me your pretty Johnny was dead; and I felt it truly more than, to my remembrance, I did the death of any child in my lifetime. Sweet thing, and is he so quickly laid to sleep? Happy he! Though we shall have no more the pleasure of his lisping and laughing, he shall have no more the pain of crying, nor of being sick, nor of dying; and hath wholly escaped the trouble of schooling, and all other sufferings of boys, and the riper and deeper griefs of riper years, this poor life being all along

nothing but a linked chain of many sorrows and many deaths. Tell my dear sister she is now so much more akin to the other world, and this will quickly be passed to us all. John is but gone an hour or two sooner to bed, as children use to do, and we are undressing to follow. And the more we put off the love of this present world and all things superfluous beforehand, we shall have the less to do when we lie down. It shall refresh me to hear from you at your leisure. Sir,

Your affectionate brother,

R. Leighton.

Edinbro', Jan. 16th.

Leighton was a great admirer of rural scenery; and, in his rides upon the Sussex downs, he often descanted, with sublime fervour, on the marvellous works of the almighty architect. Adverting to the boundless varieties of creation, he remarked, that there is no wonder after a straw, omnipotence being as necessary to make the least things out of nothing as the greatest. But his lofty mind seemed especially to delight in soaring to the celestial firmament, and expatiating through those stupendous vaults, from which so many glorious lamps are hung out, on purpose, he believed, to attract our thoughts to the glory that excelleth; and "we miss the chief benefit they are meant to render us, if we use them not to light us up to heaven." "It was a long hand," he would exclaim, "and a strong hand too, that stretched out this stately canopy above us; and to him whose work it is, we may rightly ascribe most excellent majesty." After some such expressions of devout astonishment, he would sink into silent and adoring contemplation.

To music, both vocal and instrumental, he was

very partial, and delighted in its appropriation to divine uses; but he disapproved of its being made subservient to a refined sensuality; and he affirmed that even the croaking of frogs was less grating to his ear than the idle songs which professed christians sing and play without blushing or compunction. He contrasted the harp and psaltery of David, rehearsing the praises of the Lord, with the tabret and pipe, so loathed by Isaiah, because they were employed to inflame the passions of voluptuous libertines, and to divert their thoughts from those operations of the Lord's hands, "which utter the most harmonious music."

We have seen that his walk was direct to heaven, and the drift of his conversation habitually unearthly. He died daily by the mortification of his natural appetites and affections; and he was visibly perfect in that frame of mind, which he wondered should not be universal, "in which every second thought is of death." It was not in a melancholy tone that he touched on this serious subject; for the illusions spread over earthly things had long since faded away from his eyes, which were fixed in the sublime anticipations of faith on those blissful realities, that shall open upon the redeemed of the Lord, when they have shaken off mortality. To him, therefore, death had lost its sting: it was become a pleasant theme; and gave occasion to some of his most cheerful sayings. He would compare this heavy clod of clay, with which the soul is encumbered, to the miry boots of which the traveller gladly divests himself on finishing his journey; and he could not disguise his own wish to be speedily un-

clothed, instead of lingering below till his garments were worn out and dropped off through age. In general, his temper was serene rather than gay; but his nephew states, that if ever it arose to an unusual pitch of vivacity, it was when some illness attacked him;—when, "from the shaking of the prison doors, he was led to hope, that some of those brisk blasts would throw them open, and give him the release he coveted." Then he seemed to stand tiptoe on the margin of eternity, in a delightful amazement of spirit, eagerly awaiting the summons to depart, and feeding his soul with the prospect of immortal life and glory. Sometimes, while contemplating his future restingplace, he would break out into that noble apostrophe of pious George Herbert:

> O let me roost and nestle there;
> Then of a sinner thou art rid,
> And I of hope and fear.

Hearing once of the death of a portly man,—"How is it," he exclaimed, "that A— has broke through those goodly brick walls, while I am kept in by a bit of flimsy deal?" He would say pleasantly, that he had his nightcap on, and rejoiced that it was so near bedtime, or, rather, so near the hour of rising to one who had long lain awake in the dark; and pointing to the children of the family, one evening, who were giving signs of weariness, and asking to be undressed; "Shall I," said he, "who am threescore and ten, be loth to go to bed?" This world he considered a state of nonage, and the land of mature men a land very far off. No apophthegm of uninspired wisdom pleased

him more than that of Seneca: "*Illa dies, quam ut supremam metuisses, æternitatis natalis est.*" His eagerness to depart resulted from his earnest desire to "see and enjoy perfection in the perfect sense of it, which he could not do and live." "That consummation," he would say, "is truly a hope deferred; but, when it cometh, it will be a tree of life." Perhaps, indeed, he would have been over anxious to take wing, had not his impatience been balanced by profound submission to the divine good pleasure. This alone prevented an excessive desire for the moment to arrive, when his soul, completely fledged, should soar into its proper element; should remove far away, not only from the wickednesses of a profane world, but also from the childishnesses of religious christians; and should be at rest amidst the truly reformed churches of just men made perfect,—those happy circumferences, as he termed them, which are intimately and perfectly united to their solatious centre, and to each other.

An extract from a letter supposed to have been written a short time before his death, may here be aptly inserted.

I find daily more and more reason without me, and within me yet much more, to pant and long to be gone. I am grown exceeding uneasy in writing and speaking, yea almost in thinking, when I reflect how cloudy our clearest thoughts are: but, I think again what other can we do, till the day break and the shadows flee away, as one that lieth awake in the night must be thinking; and one thought that will likely oftenest return, when by all other thoughts he finds little relief, is, *when will it be day?*

Yet Leighton, for the comfort of weak believers be it recorded, did not pretend to an absolute assurance of final salvation. Conversing, one day, in his wonted strain of holy animation, of the blessedness of being fixed as a pillar in the heavenly Jerusalem to go no more out *, he was interrupted by a near relation exclaiming, "Ah, but you have assurance." "No, truly," he replied, "only a good hope, and a great desire to see what they are doing on the other side, for of this world I am heartily weary."

Such was the holy man, of whom little now remains to be told, except his dismissal from this troublesome scene to that place among

——— the sanctities of heaven,

which he had long preoccupied in spirit and affection.

After a retirement of five years he was alarmed by receiving a letter in the King's own hand, which threatened him with an order to exchange his peaceful retreat for the distraction and turbulence of a public station. The letter ran as follows:—

My Lord, Windsor, July 16, 1679.

I am resolved to try what clemency can prevail upon such in Scotland, as will not conform to the government of the church there; for effecting of which design, I desire that you may go down to Scotland with your first conveniency; and take all possible pains for persuading all you can of both opinions to as much mutual correspondence and concord as can be: and send me from time to time characters both of men and things. In order to this design, I shall send a precept for two

* Rev. iii. 12.

hundred pounds sterling upon my Exchequer, till you resolve how to serve me in a stated employment.

Your loving Friend,

CHARLES R.

For the Bishop of Dunblane.

It was sent at the urgent suit of the Duke of Monmouth, who then administered the affairs of Scotland, and who was anxious for Leighton to go back and reside in that country, although he should not consent to resume his episcopal office. Leighton was willing to take this step, if any likelihood could be shown of benefit resulting from it; but the Duke's credit failing shortly afterwards, this project seems to have fallen with it.

In the year 1684, Leighton was earnestly requested by Burnet to go up to London, and to visit Lord Perth, who had begun to feel compunction for his lamentable departure from virtue, and had expressed an earnest desire to have the benefit of the Bishop's counsel. The hope of reclaiming that unhappy nobleman prevailed over personal considerations, and he went up to London accordingly, healthy in appearance, but with feelings of illness which may account for his presentiment that his dissolution was at hand. "The worse I am," said he in the plenitude of his self-denying benevolence, "the more I choose to go, that I may give one pull to yon poor brother, and snatch him, if possible, from the infectious air of the court." Burnet had not seen him for a considerable time, and was astonished at the freshness and vigour which he exhibited at his

advanced age. His hair was still black, and his motions were lively; and his devotion shone forth with the same lustre and vivacity as ever. Yet, on his friend expressing great pleasure at seeing him look so hearty, Leighton observed, that for all that he was very near his end, and his work and journey both were now almost done. This answer made little impression on Burnet at the time; but his mind reverted to it, after the event of three more days had stamped it with a prophetic emphasis.

The very next day he was attacked with an oppression on the chest, and with cold and stitches, which proved to be the commencement of a pleurisy. He sunk rapidly, for on the following day both speech and sense had left him; and, after panting for about twelve hours, he expired without a struggle in the arms of Bishop Burnet, his intimate friend, his ardent and affectionate admirer. Nothing is recorded of his last hours; and indeed the disease that carried him off was such, by its nature and rapid progress, as to preclude much speaking. But no record is necessary of the dying moments of a man who had "walked with God" from his infancy; and whose path had been a shining light up to the moment when the shades of death closed over it. God was, assuredly, the strength of his heart in the hour of his last agony, and is now his glorious portion, his exceeding and eternal great reward. It was needless for himself that he should have notice of the bridegroom's coming; for his lamp was always trimmed, his loins were

always girded. To his surviving friends it could have afforded little additional satisfaction to hear him express, on his death-bed, that faith and holy hope, of which his life had been one unbroken example: neither could he have left, for the benefit of posterity, any sayings more suitable to a dying believer than those he daily uttered; living as he had long lived, on the confines of the eternal world, and in the highest frame of spirituality that it seems possible for an embodied soul to attain. He entered into his rest, on the 25th of June, A. D. 1684, in the seventy-fourth year of his age.

Two circumstances connected with his death ought not to be unnoticed. He had often said, that if he were to choose a place to die in, it should be an inn. In such a place he thought that a christian believer might properly finish his pilgrimage; the whole world being to him but a large and noisy inn, and he a wayfarer, tarrying in it as short a time as possible, and then hasting away to his Father's house. Besides, he considered it undesirable to be surrounded by weeping friends and officious domestics, whose sorrowful attentions might unnerve and distract the mind, when it ought to be wholly collected and set upon God; whereas no such disturbance of spirit would ensue, from the unconcerned ministry of strangers. This singular wish was gratified, for he breathed his last in the Bell Inn, Warwick Lane.

The other circumstance is this. While he resided on his diocese in Scotland, his forbearance with his tenants was so great, that at the period of his resig-

nation considerable sums were due to him. His subsequent income seems to have arisen principally from these arrears, which dropped in slowly from time to time; and the last remittance that he had to expect was made about six weeks before his death, "so that (to adopt Bishop Burnet's happy phrase) his provision and journey failed both at once."

His remains were conveyed to Horsted Keynes, the parish in which he had spent his concluding years, and were interred in an ancient chancel* of the church, with no other pomp to hallow his obsequies, than the unbought attendance and inexpressive tears of the surrounding neighbourhood. On his tombstone is the following simple epitaph.

Depositum
Roberti ± Leightounvj̄
Archiepiscopi Glasguensis
Apud Scotas
Qui obj̄t xxv die Junij
Anno Dm̃j̄ 1684
Ætatis suæ 74.

* In this chancel, which it has lately been found necessary to take down on account of its decayed state, were some venerable tombs of the family at Broadhurst, who possessed the handsome old mansion of that name, and the patronage of the living. The whole is now transferred by purchase to another family. In the same chancel was the tomb of the Archbishop's younger brother, Sir Ellis, who died only a few months before him, as appears from the inscription on his tombstone.

Here lyeth interred the
Body of Sir Ellis Leighton, Knt.,
Who died 9th January, 1684.

It would be impossible to hang more fragrant garlands on his tomb, than are already woven for it by Bishop Burnet. The first I shall produce, is from his preface to the life of Bishop Bedell.

"I shall not add much of the bishops that have been in that church, [of Scotland,] since the last re-establishment of the order; but that I have observed among the few of them, to whom I had the honour to be known particularly, as great and exemplary things as ever I met with in all ecclesiastical history; not only the practice of the strictest of all the ancient canons, but a pitch of virtue and piety, beyond what can fall under common imitation, or be made the measure of even the most angelical rank of men; and saw things in them that would look liker fair ideas, than what men clothed with flesh and blood could grow up to. But of this I will say no more, since those that are concerned are yet alive, and their character is too singular, not to make them to be as easily known, if I enlarged upon it as if I named them *."

The next is from the "History of his own Time."

"I bear still the greatest veneration for the memory of that man, that I do for any person; and reckon my early knowledge of him, which happened the year after this, [Leighton's promotion to a bishopric,] and my

* The Life of Bishop Bedell was published in the year 1685, and to the passage above cited is subjoined the following note, which confirms, if confirmation be needed, its application to Archbishop Leighton. "The worthy person here meant is dead since this was put in the press; but both his name and a more particular account of him, as it well deserves a book by itself, so will perhaps be given on another occasion."

long and intimate conversation with him, that continued to his death, for twenty-three years, among the greatest blessings of my life; and for which I know I must give account to God, in the great day, in a most particular manner."

My third and last quotation shall be from his "Pastoral Care," in which, after stating that the matter of it had been the chief subject of his thoughts for more than thirty years, he goes on as follows.

"I was formed to them by a bishop, that had the greatest elevation of soul, the largest compass of knowledge, the most mortified and most heavenly disposition, that I ever yet saw in mortal; that had the greatest parts, as well as virtues, with the perfectest humility that I ever saw in man; and had a sublime strain in preaching, with so grave a gesture, and such a majesty, both of thought, of language, and of pronunciation, that I never once saw a wandering eye where he preached; and have seen whole assemblies often melt in tears before him; and of whom I can say with great truth, that in a free and frequent conversation with him, for above two-and-twenty years, I never knew him say an idle word, that had not a direct tendency to edification; and I never once saw him in any other temper, but that which I wished to be in, in the last moments of my life. For that pattern which I saw in him, and for that conversation which I had with him, I know how much I have to answer to God: and though my reflecting on that which I knew in him, gives me just cause of being deeply humbled in myself, and before God; yet I feel no more sensible pleasure

in any thing than in going over in my thoughts all I saw and observed in him."

Leighton was small of stature, as may be inferred from some letters of Dr. Fall * to a friend, in which he is more than once playfully denominated "the little bishop;" and one of the anecdotes inserted above, in which he contrasts himself with a corpulent person, denotes him to have been of a spare habit. To judge from his portrait, his countenance must have been a faithful interpreter of his mind; for it seems to denote a character in which the highest moral and intellectual faculties are felicitously blended. Of his manners in private life we have no more exact information than may be deduced from the foregoing narrative: but from this we may confidently pronounce, that in his general character and deportment there was an union of dignity and meekness; and that in him the sterling integrity of the christian was refined, without being impaired, by secular accomplishments. Indeed, reli-

* Dr. Fall appears first in the family of Craig Hall, (Sir Thomas Hope's,) as governor, it would seem, to a Mr. Hope, whom he accompanied to the continent. He was afterwards abroad in the same capacity, with the sons of the Marquis of Queensberry, Lord Treasurer, through whose patronage he was appointed, about the year 1682 or 1683, to be King's Historiographer, with a salary of 40*l.* sterling. On the 29th September, 1684, he was chosen principal of the College of Glasgow, from which situation he was removed, soon after the Revolution, on declining to take the oaths. In 1671 he sends his friend Wylie a translation from the Italian of the account of "The Last Conclave;" and he is supposed to be the translator of Mascardi's History of Count Fleschi's rebellion, about the year 1670. He was evidently a great admirer of Leighton, wrote a Latin preface to the first addition of the Prælectiones and Paræneses, and took a lively interest in the publication of the Commentary on the first Epistle of Peter.

gion combining, so largely as it did in Leighton, with a happy nature improved by travel, by multifarious and elegant learning, and by familiar intercourse with the politest men of the age, could not fail of forming a gentleman of a higher cast than worldly education alone can model.

It only remains to offer some remarks on the intellectual character and atttainments of Archbishop Leighton, on his genius as a writer, and on the style of his compositions.

With respect to his mental qualities, it may be safely affirmed by the most scrupulous encomiast, that he was gifted with a capacious mind, a quick apprehension, a retentive memory, a lively fancy, a correct taste, a sound and discriminating judgment. All these excellencies are conspicuous in almost every page of his writings; for in Leighton's compositions there is an extraordinary evenness. We are not recruited, here and there, by a striking thought or a brilliant sentence from the fatigue of toiling through many a heavy paragraph, but "one spirit in them rules;" and while he occasionally mounts to a surpassing height, he seldom or never sinks into flatness. The reason of this is, that he is always master of his subject, with a clear conception of his own meaning and purpose, and, a perfect command of all the subsidiary materials; and still more, that his soul is perpetually teeming with those divine inspirations, which seem only occasionally vouchsafed to ordinary mortals.

Had the mind of Leighton been less exact and per-

spicacious, the rapid and multitudinous flow of his ideas would have rendered him a writer of more than common obscurity; for he was impatient of those rules of art, by which theological compositions are usually confined. No man, indeed, was better acquainted with scholastic canons and dialectical artifices; but he towered above them. At the same time his argument never limps, although the form be not syllogistic,—the correctness of his mind preventing any material deviation from a lucid and consecutive order. A logical continuity of thought may be traced in his writings; and his ideas may, perhaps, be not unaptly compared to flowers in a garden, so luxuriantly overhanging trellises, as to obviate the primness and formality of straight lines, without however straying into a wantonness of confusion that would perplex the observer's eye.

It is not to be denied, that a more scientific arrangement in Leighton's compositions would have greatly assisted the memory of his readers; and let those, who come short of him in intellectual power, beware of imitating his laxity of method. The rules of art, though cramps to vigour, are crutches to feebleness. My impression is, however, that the effusions of our author's mind, disposed more artificially, would have lost in richness what they gained in precision, and thus the gain would have been overbalanced by the loss. From the structure and flow of his discourses, I should conjecture it to have been his custom, when he had determined to write on any subject, to ruminate on it till his mind had assumed a corresponding form and tone; after

which he poured forth his conceptions on paper without pause or effort, like the irrepressible droppings of the loaded honeycomb. So imbued was his holy soul with the principles of the gospel, and so completely was the whole scheme of revelation embraced and pervaded by his powerful intellect, that whatever he wrote on sacred subjects came forth with an easy flow, clear, serene, and limpid. In all his compositions there is a delightful consistency; nothing indigested and turbid; no dissonances of thought, no jarring positions; none of the fluctuations, the ambiguities, the contradictions, which betray a penury of knowledge, or an imperfect assimilation of it with the understanding. Equally master of every part of the evangelical system, he never steps out of his way to avoid what encounters him, or to pick up what is not obvious: he never betakes himself to the covers of unfairness or ignorance; but he discusses, with the utmost intrepidity and clearness, the topic that comes before him.

Moreover, it not a little enhances the value of his writings, that he is fully aware how far the legitimate range of human inquiry extends, and what boundary Divine wisdom hath assigned to man's inquisitiveness. While the half-learned theologian beats about in the dark, and vainly attempts a passage through metaphysical labyrinths which it is the part of sober wisdom not to enter, the sagacious Leighton distinctly sees the line beyond which speculation is folly; and at that limit he stops with a promptness of decision, and religious modesty, very graceful in one who has proceeded up to it with such calm assurance.

Such a writer as Leighton was incapable of parade. He was too intent upon his subject to be choice of words and phrases; and his works discover a noble carelessness of diction, which in some respects enhances their beauty. Their strength is not wasted by excessive polishing: their glow is not impaired by reiterated touches. But, though he was little curious in culling words and compounding sentences, his language is generally apt and significant, sufficient for the grandeur of his conceptions without encumbering them. If not always grammatically correct, it is better than mere correctness would make it, more forcible and touching, attracting little notice to itself, but leaving the reader to the full impulse of those ideas of which it is the vehicle. Leighton is great by the magnificence of thought; by the spontaneous emanations of a mind replete with sacred knowledge, and bursting with seraphic affections; by that pauseless flow of intellectual splendour, in which the outward shell, the intermediate letter, is eclipsed and almost annihilated, that full scope may be given to the mighty effulgence of the informing spirit.

Dr. Doddridge applies to his eloquence the description given by the great epic Poet of the oratory of Ulysses:

—— ἔπεα νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότα χειμερίῃσιν:

but in this he seems to have misconceived the meaning of Homer, who compares the thronging words and forcible elocution of the Grecian hero to a storm of pelting rain and driving sleet, and not to flakes of snow descending in rapid yet gentle succession.

The characteristics of his style are a mild sublimity, a sweet and mellow pathos. There is nothing languid and effeminate in his productions : but while an exquisite flavour is communicated to them by the suavity of his spirit, the strength of his well-informed and masculine understanding makes them abundantly solid and nutritious. His mind is not the pulpy reed distilling luscious juices ; it is *the rock pouring forth rivers of oil.*

Leighton never affects a concise sententiousness. He is perfectly free from that trick of antithesis which caught the vicious taste of the day ; or was tolerated under the plea that a sentiment would be more securely lodged in the memory, if the sentence which conveyed it were armed with an epigrammatic point. But his copiousness does not consist in a vain prodigality of words. It is the redundance of a full mind, venting itself that it may be refreshed, and not of a perplexed mind, painfully disembarrassing itself by endless explanations. He is not the literary mechanic, who sets himself to spin out a scanty material into a vast expanse of web, or to hammer out a petty ingot into an immense surface ; but his diffuseness, or rather profuseness, results from the affluence of his knowledge ; from the broad survey of his commanding intellect ; and from that acuteness, which at once resolves into its elements a complex proposition, and tracks a remote consequence through all its gradations to its principle. It may be safely affirmed that there are not many theological writers, in whose volumes are more of the "seeds of things,"

Perhaps he may be less entitled, than some of his great contemporaries, to the praise of being an original thinker: yet the thoughts of others become so identified in him with whatever it is that constitutes the intellectual individuality of a writer, as to issue from his mind with his own peculiar stamp and superscription. Attentive students of his works will be repaid by an abundance of excellent matter; and will never perceive symptoms of the knowledge and vigour of the writer being nearly run out. In fact, he is never exhausted, till he has exhausted the subject; and this he makes no efforts to accomplish, but checks his flowing mind when enough has been effused, lest he inundate instead of irrigating.

To his perfect freedom from the vanity of authorship it may partly be ascribed that, with all his knowledge and fertility of invention, Leighton is never betrayed into wearisome and subtile details. There is in him no puerile ambition of dissecting a principle into its minutest ramifications, when such elaborate precision would serve no higher end than to display the skill of the artist. He lays down the fundamentals of christian faith and practice, with just enough of individual application to give them weight and clearness, and then leaves them to take root and fructify in the bosoms of those whom he addresses.

Neither can it have escaped the observation of one at all conversant with his writings, that it is never the purpose of his mind to make good any particular system of divinity, nor to fortify its weak positions, and set off its strong proofs and advantages. He is

constantly aiming at higher matters; and shakes off with disdain the servile fetters which would shackle the free and generous spirit of religion. Brought up in the school of rigid Calvinism, he adhered, in the judgment of his maturer years, to the tenets of the French reformer, divested however of their rigour. To say that he coincided, for the most part, with Calvin in the interpretation of scripture would be correct; but it would be most incorrect to denominate him a Calvinist, if that appellation imply an assent to a particular scheme of theology, on the authority of that famous divine. Leighton, though the humblest of mankind, was not weakly distrustful of his own powers; and therefore we never find him slavishly treading in the footsteps of predecessors. Yet, though free and independent, he is not audacious and dogmatical. His manner of handling the profound mystery of predestination reads an excellent lesson to those precipitate sciolists, who make an unqualified affirmation of that mystery, in the high Calvinistic sense, to be the test of orthodoxy, and, one might almost add, the passport to salvation;—who contrive to interweave it with every sermon and treatise;—and who, instead of building on it sublime ideas of the majesty and goodness of God, and deducing from it powerful motives to humility and holiness, so treat it, as to weaken the force of moral and religious obligation on the mind, and to disparage the awful sanctity of the supreme and impartial governor of mankind.

It is one of our author's excellencies, that he assigns to the several parts of the system of Redemption their

relative rank and importance. In unfolding the dignity of Christ, the glory of his person, and the satisfactory virtue of his death, no one can exceed him in scriptural orthodoxy and devotional feeling. Yet with him the atonement is not of such engrossing magnitude, as to overshadow the chief ends for which a piacular sacrifice was appointed; but its incalculable value in respect to mankind, is shewn to arise from its being the foundation, on which the spiritual temple of God is to be rebuilt. To open a way for the return of the Holy Spirit to the world, is the grand scope and aim of the mediatorial covenant as prominently exhibited by Leighton; and its ultimate glory is shewn to result from the renovation of sinners to righteousness, of which the death of Jesus Christ is in its meritorious consequence effective, by appeasing the judicial resentment of heaven, and removing the interdict which had restrained the effusions of the sanctifying Spirit.

The points, indeed, on which his soul was constantly fixed, whence accrues such a heavenly grandeur to all his discourses, were the noble vocation of a christian, and the height to which a regenerate soul ought to rise above sublunary objects; the nearness of death; the mysterious vastness of the Godhead; the stupendous concerns of eternity; and the blessedness resulting from close communion with the Father of spirits, and from conformity to the pattern which Jesus Christ bequeathed to his followers of consummate purity and virtue. When Leighton addresses himself to these matters, he does indeed utter his voice from high

places; and impresses us with the idea of a man who, from an eminence beyond the region of fogs and clouds and meteors, has surveyed whatever is above and beneath—things in heaven and things upon the earth, with a vast advantage for estimating justly the value of the one and of the other. He seems to have lately come down from conversing with God upon the mount, anointed and preeminently qualified to represent the high priest of the christian temple; to draw aside the outward veil, and to disclose the glorious spirit of religion in its innermost sanctuary.

It is impossible to dip into his writings, without observing with how brilliant a fancy he was endowed. They sparkle with beautiful images, which either are drawn from the magazines of scripture, or are such as would naturally present themselves to an inventive and elegant mind, furnished, as Leighton's was, with the literary products of every clime and age, and with the accumulated stores of civil and ecclesiastical erudition, and intent upon making whatever it has collected subservient to the illustration of divine truth. By his holy skill sacred learning is made to purify profane, and profane learning to elucidate and embellish sacred. The gold and silver of Egypt are moulded into vessels for the tabernacle of Jehovah; while the living waters of the sanctuary are taught to meander through fields of classic lore, imparting to their produce celestial fragrancy and virtue.

Among the just commendations of this great and good man's writings, we must not omit their extraordinary decency, which may be confidently ascribed to a

singular purity of mind, since it is foreign to the school in which he was educated. No coarse, indelicate metaphor, the offspring of a gross imagination, ever sullies his pages; and if it fall in his way to handle subjects which bring into view the baser passions and appetites of our nature, he spreads over their unseemliness such a veil of chastity, that nothing appears to incur a frown from the austerest gravity, or to put the most susceptible modesty to the blush.

Archbishop Leighton will hardly rank in the foremost line of philologists and theological critics. Yet, in general, he is a safe guide in the exposition of particular texts; and if sometimes he mistake the precise sense of the passage he discusses, still his improvement of it is so orthodox and pious, that one might be tempted to think, that it is better to err with Leighton than to go right with the rest of mankind. He had carefully perused the original text of both the old and the new testament; and, by a sober application of etymological analysis, he frequently throws light on obscure sentences of the sacred volume. From the Fathers also, of whom he was a diligent student, as the pen-marked copies of their works in his library testify, he gathered many beautiful thoughts, which are interspersed in his own lucubrations; the whole of which have a strong savour of primitive spirituality. But that which adds so peculiar a zest to his compositions, is the quality usually denominated Unction. His mouth spake out of the abundance of his heart. Instead of a dry didactic statement, which, how faultless soever in doctrine and form, will seldom beget sympathy, we have

in him the libation upon the sacrifice,—the holy affections of his soul poured out on the solid products of his understanding, and imparting to them a delicious odour and irresistible penetrancy. In every page of his books there is an impassioned earnestness, a soul-subduing pathos, which make it impossible to doubt, that the sentiments he strives to communicate were thoroughly wrought into his own spirit. Indeed, he does not seem so much to appeal to his readers, as unconsciously to let them into the chamber of his own soul, on which they may see the gospel traced in its native lineaments ; and may recognise the loveliness of divine truth in the most perfect union, of which it is capable, with the heart and understanding of a frail and fallible mortal.

Some allusion has been dropped in this memoir to his excellence in the pulpit. Burnet in eulogizing his preaching pronounces it " rather too fine ;" and it did undoubtedly soar above the flight of ordinary minds, or it might rather be said of minds not elevated by habits of divine contemplation. It was surprisingly free from the quaint and sectarian jargon of the day, as will be seen by comparing his printed discourses with those precious morsels, which are embalmed in a work that came out shortly after the Revolution, and is entitled " Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence Displayed." In the sermons of Leighton there is nothing puerile, low, or ludicrous ; no fantastic conceits and impertinent pleasantries ; no wild interpretations of scripture and bombastic rhapsodies; no desultory and pedantic excursions. He scorned to set off his matter, or scrupled to profane it, with tawdry ornaments and garish colours.

His phraseology, at once sedate and noble, well becomes the ambassador of heaven; and denotes a profound veneration for the oracles of God, a pious dread of distorting their sense, and of giving a human figure and colour to any portion of revelation, and an ardent desire to convert thoughtless sinners, and to edify serious believers. Such were his matter and diction, with which his manner in the pulpit corresponded. Superior to popular applause, he had no peculiarities about his delivery; unless indeed simplicity, earnestness, and gravity, were at that time uncommon qualities. He never aimed at effect by oratorical grimace, nor strove, as was the general practice, to carry his hearers by a tempest of voice and gesture: and, indeed, the natural feebleness of his voice would have interdicted such exertions, had his taste permitted them. But, when he preached, the manner was in admirable harmony with the message; and so well did the majesty and beauty of his enunciation accord with the solemn truths of which he was the herald, that the congregations he addressed were subdued and enchained, as by the magic of an unearthly eloquence.

The work, which is the crown of his posthumous glory in the church, is the Commentary on the first epistle of St. Peter. It is a treasury of sound experimental divinity, and argues an extraordinary ripeness of christian attainments. It was probably delivered from the pulpit, and is drawn out in the familiar form of exposition; the clauses, and even the emphatic words of each text being mostly explained in course,

and no artificial arrangement observed in discussing the several subjects introduced by the apostle. Still, the general scope and coherence of each passage are carefully kept in view; and the main truth asserted or proved is never lost sight of, in unfolding the particular propositions from which it is educed. This work will always class among the first of uninspired scriptures, and can never cease to constitute the admiration and delight of the christian and the scholar. *Hinc lucem haurire est, et pocula sacra.*

Next in worth to this commentary are his expositions of "The Creed," "The Lord's Prayer," and "The Ten Commandments;" which seem to have been carefully pondered, and are of equal account as summaries of exegetical and of practical divinity. The fragment of a commentary, not long brought to light, on the first eight chapters and part of the ninth of St. Matthew's gospel, has touches of his fine genius, and is imbued with his heavenly spirit; but it is decidedly inferior to that on the first epistle of Peter. It consists of little more than notes, with which he probably assisted his memory in preaching to rustic auditories, and wherein he contracts the natural size of his intellect to the puny proportions of babes. His Meditations, Critical and Practical, on Psalms iv., xxxii., and cxxx., translated from the original Latin, under the inspection of Dr. Doddridge; and his Expository Lectures on Psalm xxxix., and on one or two other portions of Scripture, have the flavour of the parent soil, but demand no particular comment. They are sketches only, but, like the line of the painter, they betray a master-

hand. The Meditations, which were spoken in Latin to the Edinburgh collegians, are felicitous essays, glistening with holy animation, and are more classically adorned than the Expository Lectures: not, however, in a degree to unfit them for the closet of unlettered devotion.

On his Rules and Instructions for a Holy Life, which are comprised in a few pages, some strictures are necessary. It is impossible to read them without conceiving a great opinion of the sanctity of the mind from which they issued. They are the rules by which Leighton's own life was fashioned, and do not, I believe, delineate a perfection much exceeding his actual attainments. Yet they need to be read with caution, being somewhat tinged with mysticism,—a disease almost peculiar to those who inhabit the highest regions, and breathe the purest atmosphere of devotion. The religion of this manual is doubtless the religion of the bible: but then it is pushed into abstractions, in the pursuit of which an ordinary mind would be embarrassed and utterly discouraged;—abstractions, which go beyond what the method of Christ and his apostles authorizes, or what is compatible with the constitution of our nature, and the frame of society resulting from that constitution. It is one incomparable excellence of the religion of Jesus Christ, that it does not stand aloof, and call those who would embrace it into wilds and solitudes; but it enters our habitations, eating and drinking, in the form and with the affections of our nature; it mingles its pure and peaceful and benignant influences with all the various commerce of life; and it converts man to

holiness, without displacing him from his proper sphere, or disturbing any of those relations which arise out of his civil and domestic condition. Leighton has not in these particulars followed so closely, as might have been wished, in the track of the great Author of Christianity. Perhaps it is the exclusive prerogative of a wisdom calm and comprehensive as God's, to exhibit a system, which shall raise debased man to the highest perfection of which he is capable, without deranging the order and economy of the present world. When good men, even with the bible before them, set themselves to draw out rules for the conduct of the soul, they are apt to overstep the simplicity and wise reserve of scripture ; and, by too minute and peremptory an application of principles, which the blessed Jesus, with exemplary tenderness and prudence, left it to each individual to apply, they sometimes bring a snare upon the conscience, relax altogether the tottering knees, and lead ardent or melancholy spirits into dangerous subtleties. I must own myself suspicious of the consequences of enhancing upon Scripture, and of constructing a model, which, at first sight, strikes the eye, as being something more lofty and spiritual than is set forth in the sacred records. The aim at gratuitous refinements in spirituality requires the control of a very sober judgment and a deep humility, to prevent its being injurious to sound religious practice ; for there is danger of the substance of christian piety flying off under too intense a process of sublimation. When men, instead of diligently forming themselves to that plain and palpable goodness, which it is the drift of the

gospel to inculcate, aspire to something superhuman and angelical, there is danger of their resting satisfied with the attempt, though it be unprosperous. Conscience will not so sternly reproach them for failing in extraordinary efforts which few have the courage to make, as it would if they came short of the ordinary proficiency of christians ; and possibly, in striving to sustain themselves in regions too rare for human piety, and in chasing a chimerical perfection, they may waste that energy which, had it been more humbly directed, would have made them approved of God and useful to mankind. When christians attain, indeed, to this height of holiness, they become transcendent luminaries, peerless stars of the morning, who invigorate and gladden that lower body of the church, round which they revolve in their superior orbit. Be it far from me and from any christian to depreciate such aims and such attainments. For our author's vindication it is fully sufficient, that the Directory * in question exhibits the scope of his own divine ambition, and not the standard by which he measured others. A mature and intelligent christian may at any time read it with advantage ; and to those who are satisfied with a religion of form and ceremony it may also be serviceable, by acquainting them with the tremendous secret, that they are strangers to the reality and power of godliness. But it would be unwise and unsafe to place it in the hands of novices, sincere but feeble converts, lest they should be utterly dis-

* It ought perhaps to be mentioned that the genuineness of this Directory has been suspected: but I would venture to suggest that a work so redolent of Leighton's spirit can hardly have another extraction.

heartened, and their pious aspirations be smothered in despair. Whoever is conversant with the "Imitation of Jesus Christ," that beautiful manual of devotion, which is popularly ascribed to Thomas à Kempis, will recognize in the "Rules and Instructions for a Holy Life," much of the same spirit, and the same extreme ideas of self-exinanition and total absorption in God. Of both it must be confessed—as Pope Innocent XII. observed of Fenelon, to whom Leighton bore no slight resemblance in the qualities of the mind and heart—that if they erred, it was through an exuberant love of God, *excessu amoris Dei.* It was the vehemence of their piety which hurried away their judgment; and the uncommon mistake of stating christian perfection too high is beyond all comparison less momentous, than the usual error of sinking it below the scriptural standard.

In the Latin Prelections, which have been translated by Dr. Fall, the principal doctrines of the christian faith are developed by our author with exquisite learning, judgment, and piety. These lectures constitute an invaluable series of theological instructions; and were delivered perhaps nearly in the order in which they are now arranged. After showing that happiness, of which so strong a desire is implanted in the human breast, is not to be drawn from earthly fountains, he proves that an immortal nature must fetch its joys from immortal sources. Hence he is led to treat of the existence, the nature, the government of God, which he does with equal energy and sobriety; demonstrating the title such a being possesses to the affectionate

allegiance of his rational creatures, whose felicity must depend on their maintaining that place in the moral system of the universe, wherein the infallible wisdom of the Creator hath fixed them. He then represents the extensive ruin that ensued from the defection of Adam, and goes on to the reparation, achieved by Messiah, of the injury done to God by the primal sin, and of the destruction it brought upon mankind. The nature of christian salvation is further developed, as consisting in the production of vital and immortal principles in the soul by the mysterious energy of the Holy Spirit; which process constitutes the true adoption of sinners through the Saviour, and is their temporal initiation to the enjoyment of life eternal. Moreover he expatiates with great beauty and emphasis, on the happiness of a life regulated by the fear of God, and by the rules of the gospel; and he exhorts the students to put forth all their ardour in prosecuting that divine science which lays open the road to imperishable glories.

The style of these lectures justifies Burnet's commendation of our Author's latinity. Not formed upon any single pattern, but pure, simple, and flowing, his diction indicates a large and critical acquaintance with the best models. It is the phraseology of a man who thought in Latin, and not of one who clothed in a foreign dress ideas which were preconceived in his native tongue. Hence these dissertations are not mere jingle and glitter, but are solid and argumentative. Useless words and phrases are never introduced to embellish a period; nor does an apt thought ever seem to be abandoned

too soon or imperfectly evolved, because the writer was unable to embody it in a strange language. He moves in a Roman mantle with as little embarrassment as in a native garb. In these Lectures, moreover, which were addressed to literary students, Leighton permits himself to quote largely from heathen authors; and one is struck with astonishment at the extent of his erudition, which is not ostentatiously displayed, but comes in most appropriately wherever it can avail to throw light upon the subjects he is discussing. The whole volume of profane literature seems to be unrolled before him, and is not too expanded for his ample survey. The philosophers, the poets, the historians of Rome and Athens; all the sons of science, whether Jews or Gentiles, ancient or modern; all are cited to pay the various homage enjoined by reason or primæval tradition, to the being, the perfections, the natural and moral government of God; and to confirm the need of a revelation, which should capacitate mankind to recover under a new grant and title, the honours, possessions, and immunities forfeited by disobedience.

The Paræneses were short exhortations to the scholars about to graduate, and were composed in Latin. In them it is the speaker's great endeavour to guard his auditors against an undue estimation of human learning and literary honours, and to put them on striving after that genuine theosophy, which consists in a knowledge of God as he reveals himself to mankind in the Gospel. Each of these hortatory addresses concludes with a beautiful and appropriate

prayer; and they, as well as the lectures, breathe an affectionate desire to turn the hearts of the collegians from that vain knowledge which increaseth sorrow, to that true and heavenly wisdom by which all who possess it are exalted to honour. Notwithstanding the multitude of mistakes by which the author's sense was disfigured and disguised in the former editions of these lectures, no divine ever rose from the perusal of them without feeling himself richly repaid; and now that by the learning and diligence of Professor Scholefield, of Cambridge, they are nearly restored to their primitive beauty, it may be hoped that they will find the place they merit in our schools of divinity. In none of his compositions does this holy Bishop rise more successfully to the height of his sublime argument, or more feelingly exhibit divine philosophy, as a

"Feast of nectar'd sweets."

The fifth, of which the subject is the immortality of the soul, is a fine specimen of christian illumination, consummating the twilight philosophy, and sanctifying the eloquent style of Tully or Seneca. In the sixth, which treats of the life to come, the wretchedness of mortality is forcibly contrasted with the blessedness of heaven; and the reader is attracted by a charm of singular potency from a world in which every thing is transient but sorrow, to a world of which the felicity and grandeur are immutable as their eternal parent, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

It has been observed to me by a learned friend,

whose classical taste, erudition, and piety, well qualify him for appreciating a mind gifted and stored like Leighton's, that the phrase in this sixth lecture "huic gurgustiolo inclusi," may have been suggested by the following line in the opening of Comus, then lately published:

"Confined and pester'd in this pinfold here."

And the beautiful sentiment of the lines just preceding, is recognized by the same critical sagacity in a sentence of the second Paræsis. Milton writes;

——————————— "insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
Which men call earth."

And Leighton exhorts us, "In purioris multò ac pacatioris veritatis luce, longè suprà turbidam illam et nebulosam polemicorum regionem versari." In this conjecture of my learned friend, which accredits and is accredited by the character of Leighton for elegant reading, I cordially agree; nor can I do better than to adopt his felicitous and expressive language in styling those Paræneses, "Specimens of pathetic piety, uttered in classic elegance, and exhibiting the apostle of Christ in the garb and office of academic lecturer."

Dr. Fall, and not Bishop Burnet, as has been erroneously asserted, was the original editor of Leighton's works. The first of them which saw the light, was a volume of eighteen sermons, printed in London,

1692, expressly stated to be copied "from his papers written with his own hand." It is accompanied with a preface by the Editor, of which the following is an extract.—"To the pious and devout reader. The Discourses, here published, are but a small taste of a great many more, that were written by the same most reverend author. A judgment will be made from the reception these meet with, concerning the publishing other discourses by the same pen. His composures in Latin (which appear to have been written and delivered, when he was principal of the College of Edinburgh) are also transcribing for the press, and may in a convenient time see the light, for they need not fear it." Accordingly, in 1693, his Prælectiones Theologicæ came out in quarto, with a preface in the same language, by Dr. Fall, printed in London. The next portion of his works, produced to the public, seems to have been the "Commentary on Peter," Vol. I., 4to., York, 1693. In an advertisement prefixed to this volume, Dr. Fall alludes to the favourable reception of his former works. The second volume of this Commentary was published, London, 1694; and in the preface, Dr. Fall mentions that he has still in his hands some brief discourses by Leighton on the Epistle to the Ephesians, and also his expositions of the Decalogue, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, which might hereafter be printed. These, except the discourses on the Epistles to the Ephesians, came out, London, 1701, 8vo., together with his two discourses, one on St. Matthew xxii. 37, 38, 39; the other on Heb. viii. 10; to which was annexed a short Catechism.

There was also published a volume of "Tracts," 12mo., London, 1708; which comprised the Rules for a Holy Life, one Sermon, and the Catechism. The later editions of his works are sufficiently known.

It may gratify some readers to have the Will of Archbishop Leighton, and a few particulars of the disposition of his property subjoined, along with the most probable account of his ecclesiastical income. The following is the Will:—

At Broadhurst, Feb. 17, 1683.

Being at present (thanks be to God) in my accustomed health of body and soundness of mind and memory, I do write this with my own hand, to signify, that when the day I so much wish and long for is come, that shall set me free of this prison of clay wherein I am lodged, what I leave behind me of money, goods, or chattels, or whatsoever of any kind was called mine, I do devote to charitable uses; partly, such as I have recommended particularly, to my sister Mrs. Sapphira Lightmaker and her son Master Edward Lightmaker, of Broadhurst, and the remainder to such other charities, as their own discretion shall think fittest. Only I desire each of them to accept of a small token of a little grateful acknowledgment of their great kindness, and trouble they have had with me for some years that I was their guest, the proportion whereof (to remove their scruple of taking it) I did expressly name to themselves, while I was with them, before the writing hereof, and likewise after I have wrote it. But they need not give any account of it to any other, the whole being left to their disposal. Neither I hope will any other friends or relations of mine take it unkind, that I bequeath no legacy to any of them, designing, as is said, so entirely to charity the whole remains. Only my books I leave and bequeath to the Cathedral of Dunblane in Scotland, to remain there for the use of

the clergy of that Diocese. I think I need no more, but that I appoint my said sister Mrs. Sapphira Lightmaker, of Broadhurst, and her son Mr. Edward Lightmaker of Broadhurst, joint executors of this my will,—if they be both living at my decease, as I hope they shall; or if that one of them shall be surviving, that one is to be the sole executor of it. I hope none will raise any question or doubt about this upon any omission or informality of expression in it; being for prevention thereof as plainly expressed as it could be conceived by me. And this I declare to be the last will and testament of

ROBERT LEIGHTON.

We have already had occasion to observe, that his expenditure upon himself was frugal almost to parsimony, but from this frugality no accumulation resulted. One great object of his self-denial was to provide funds for the dissemination of sound religious learning. Accordingly, when Principal of the University of Edinburgh, he presented that city with 150*l.* sterling for the support of a bursary or scholarship in philosophy. Glasgow also is indebted to this venerable man for two bursaries, which are destined to assist in the maintenance of two students for the space of six years; the four first to be spent in philosophical pursuits, and the two last in the study of divinity: and should the student not be otherwise provided for, or wish to continue his theological studies, the magistrates and council are authorised to prolong his tenure of the studentship, for two or three additional years. In the election of scholars, the trustees are not limited to any particular description of persons; but they are required to present two candidates, when a bursary has become

vacant, for a trial of their comparative merits; and the one reported by the examiners to be the best qualified, is to receive a presentation from the officers of the town. The annual value of each bursary is 9*l.* sterling. In one of the deeds which conferred this benefit on indigent students, 150*l.* were devised to the hospital of St. Nicholas in Glasgow, for two poor men of good report. Three paupers are now enjoying the benefit of this legacy, which produces 4*l.* 10*s.* annually for each pensioner.

To the diocese of Dunblane, which was ill provided with books, he bequeathed his valuable library; and after his removal thence, he made over for the benefit of the poor a considerable sum of money, due to him from a gentleman of that place, which money was afterwards paid, and appropriated agreeably to the intentions of the benefactor.

It is not easy to ascertain the precise amount of his income when he was Bishop of Dunblane. Most likely the revenues of the see, together with the salary accruing from the Chapel Royal at Stirling, of which the diocesan of Dunblane was Dean by right of office, did not exceed 200*l.* That bishopric was the poorest in Scotland, except those of Caithness and Argyle. Shortly after the Reformation, its rental was taken at 313*l.* per annum in money, besides a stated allowance of grain; but then there were several livings annexed to it. In the valuation book of Aberdeenshire, the bishop of Dunblane is styled Parson of Monimusk, the reason of which is, that at Monimusk there was formerly a priory, the proceeds of which were assigned by

James the Sixth in 1617 to the see of Dunblane. It was this Prince who augmented it with the deanery of the Chapel Royal, which was considerably lucrative; and he superadded the abbey of Cross-raguel, in Ayrshire.

If all these golden rivulets poured into Dunblane, when Leighton was its diocesan, he would be sufficiently opulent. But it is more than probable that several of them were dried up, or intercepted, and that only a small proportion of the nominal rental flowed into the episcopal reservoir. This proportion would be further diminished by the excessive indulgence, with which he always listened to defaulters, who pleaded poverty in excuse for not making good their payments.

APPENDIX.

TWO LETTERS,

COMMONLY REPUTED TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY THE BISHOP OF DUNBLANE.

LETTER I.

SIR,

IN the late conference I had with your friend, the sum of what I said was this :—

1. That episcopal government, managed in conjunction with presbyters in presbyteries and synods, is not contrary either to the rule of scripture, or the example of the primitive church, but most agreeable to both.

2. Yea, it is not contrary to that very covenant, which is pretended by so many as the main, if not the only reason of their scrupling; and for their sakes it is necessary to add this. For notwithstanding the many irregularities both in the matter and form of that covenant, and the illegal and violent ways of pressing and prosecuting of it, yet to them who remain under the conscience of its full force and obligation, and in that seem invincibly persuaded, it is certainly most pertinent, if it be true, to declare the consistence of the even present government with that obligation. And as both these assertions, I believe upon the exactest (if impartial and impassionate) inquiry, will be found to be in themselves true; so they are owned by the generality of the presbyterians in England; as themselves have published their opinion in print under this title:—*Two Papers of proposals humbly presented to his Majesty by the Reverend Ministers of the Presbyterian persuasion, Printed at London, Anno* 1660.

Besides other passages in these papers to the same purpose,

at page 11 and 12, are these words: "And as these are our general ends and motives, so we are induced to insist upon the form of a synodical government, conjunct with a fixed presidency; for these reasons.

1. "We have reason to believe that no other terms will be so generally agreed on, &c.

2. "It being agreeable to the Scripture and primitive government, is likeliest to be the way of a more universal concord, if ever the churches on earth arrive to such a blessing: however, it will be most acceptable to God, and well-informed consciences.

3. "It will promote the practice of discipline and godliness without disorder, and promote order without hindering discipline and godliness.

4. "And it is not to be silenced (though in some respect we are loth to mention it) that it will save the nation from the violation of their solemn vow and covenant, without wronging the church at all, or breaking any other oath, &c." And a little after they add, that the prelacy disclaimed in that covenant, was the engrossing of the sole power of ordination and jurisdiction, and exercising of the whole discipline absolutely by bishops themselves and their delegates, chancellors, surrogates, and officials, &c. excluding wholly the pastors of particular churches from all share in it. And there is one of prime note amongst them, who, in a large treatise of church-government, doth clearly evince, that this was the mind both of the parliament of England, and of the assembly of divines at Westminster, as they themselves did expressly declare it, in the admitting of the covenant, "that they understand it not to be against all episcopacy, but only against the particular frame, as it is worded in the article itself: for our principal model in England, and the way of managing of it, whatsoever is amiss (and it can be no wrong to make that supposition concerning any church on earth), or whatsoever they apprehend to be amiss, though it may be upon mistake, the brethren that are

dissatisfied had possibly better acquitted their duty by free admonitions and significations of their own sense in all things, than by leaving of their station, which is the one thing that hath made the breach (I fear) very hard to cure, and in human appearance near to incurable: but there is much charity due to them, as following the dictate of their own conscience: and they owe, and, I hope, pay the same back again to those that do the same in another way; and whatsoever may be the readiest and happiest way of reuniting those that are mutually so minded, the Lord reveal it to them in due time." This one word I shall add, That this difference should arise to so great a height, may seem somewhat strange to any man that calmly considers, that there is in this church no change at all, neither in the doctrine nor worship, no nor in the substance of the discipline itself: but when it falls on matters easily inflammable, how little a spark, how great a fire will it kindle?

Because every one hath not the book, I have transcribed here Mr. Baxter's own words. *Bax. of Church Government*, P. III. c. i. p. 276.

"An Episcopacy desirable for the reformation and peace of the churches. A fixed president *durante vitâ*, pp. 297, 330. But some will say, we are engaged against all prelacy by covenant, and therefore cannot yield to so much as you do without perjury. Ans. That this is utterly untrue, I thus demonstrate.

1. "When that covenant was presented to the assembly with the bare name of prelacy joined to popery, many grave and reverend divines desired that the word prelacy might be explained, because it was not all episcopacy they were against; and thereupon the following concatenation in the parenthesis was given by way of explication in these words: That is church-government by archbishops, bishops, their chancellors and commissaries, deans, and chapters, archdeans, and all the other ecclesiastical officers depending on that hierarchy. By which it appears, that it was only the English hierarchy or

frame that was covenanted against, and that which was then existent that was taken down.

2. "When the House of Lords took the covenant, Mr. Thomas Coleman, that gave it them, did so explain it, and profess that it was not their intent to covenant against all episcopacy, and upon this explication it was taken; and certainly the parliament was most capable of giving the due sense of it, because it was they that did impose it.

3. "And it could not be all episcopacy that was excluded, because a parochial episcopacy was at the same time used and approved commonly here in England.

4. "And in Scotland they had used the help of visiters for the reformation of their churches, committing the care of a country or circuit to some one man, which was as high a sort of episcopacy, at least as any I am pleading for. Besides that they had moderators in all their synods, which were temporary bishops.

5. "Also the chief divines of the late assembly at Westminster, that recommended that covenant to the nations, have professed their own judgments for such a moderate episcopacy as I am here defending, and therefore never intended the exclusion of this by covenant."

After he adds, "As we have prelacy to beware of, so we have the contrary extreme to avoid, and the church's peace (if it may be) to procure; and as we must not take down the ministry, lest it prepare men for episcopacy, so neither must we be against any profitable exercise of the ministry, or desirable order amongst them for fear of introducing prelacy." Thus far Baxter's own words.

There is another that hath writ a treatise on purpose, and that zealous and strict enough, touching the obligation of the league and covenant, under the name of Theophilus Timorcus. And yet therein it is expressly asserted, that "however, at first, it might appear that the parliament had renounced all episcopacy, yet upon stricter inquiry, it was evident to the author,

that that very scruple was made by some members in parliament, and resolved (with the consent of their brethren in Scotland) that the covenant was only intended against prelacy as then it was in being in England, leaving a latitude for episcopacy, *&c.*"

It would be noted, that when that covenant was framed, there was no episcopacy at all in being in Scotland, but in England only; so that the extirpation of that frame only could then be meant and intended. Likewise it would be considered, that though there is in Scotland at present the name of dean, and chapter, and commissaries, yet that none of those at all do exercise any part of the discipline under that name, neither any other, as chancellor or surrogate, &c., by delegation from bishops, with a total exclusion of the community of presbyters from all power and share in it, which is the great point of difference betwixt that model and this with us, and imports so much as to the main of discipline. I do not deny that the generality of the people, yea even of ministers in Scotland, when they took the covenant, might likewise understand that article as against all episcopacy whatsoever, even the most moderate, especially if it should be restored under the express name of bishops and archbishops; never considering how different the nature, and model, and way of exercising it may be, though under the same names, and that the due regulating of the thing is much more to be regarded than either the retaining or altering of the name. But though they did not then consider any such thing, yet certainly it concerns them now to consider it, when it is represented to them, that not only the words of the oath itself do very genuinely consist with such a qualified and distinctive sense, but that the very composers or imposers of it, or a considerable part of them, did so understand and intend it. And unless they make it appear, that the episcopacy now in question with us in Scotland is either contrary to the word, or to that mitigated sense of their own oath, it would seem more suitable to christian charity and modera-

tion, rather to yield to it as tolerable, at least, than to continue so inflexibly fast to their first mistakes and excessive zeal, as for love of it to divide from their church, and break the bond of peace.

It may likewise be granted, that some learned men in England, who refused to take the covenant, did possibly except against that article of it, as signifying the total renunciation and abolition of all episcopacy; and seeing that was the real event and consequent of it, and they having many other strong and weighty reasons for refusing it, it is no wonder that they were little curious to inquire what passed amongst the contrivers of it, and what distinction or different senses either the words of that article might admit, or those contrivers might intend by them. And the truth is, that besides many other evils, the iniquity and unhappiness of such oaths and covenants lies much in this, that being commonly framed by persons that, even amongst themselves, are not fully of one mind, but have their different opinions and interests to serve (and it was so even in this), they are commonly patched up of so many several articles and clauses, and those too of so versatile and ambiguous terms, that they prove most wretched snares, thickets of briars and thorns to the consciences of those that are engaged in them, and matter of endless contentions and disputes amongst them about the true sense and intendment, and the tie and obligements of those doubtful clauses, especially in some such alterations and revolutions of affairs as always may, and often do, even within few years, follow after them; for the models and productions of such devices are not usually long-lived. And whatsoever may be said for their excuse in whole or in part, who, in yieldance to the power that pressed it, and the general opinion of this church at that time, did take that covenant in the most moderate and least schismatical sense that the terms can admit; yet, I know not what can be said to clear them of a very great sin, that not only framed such an engine, but violently imposed it upon all ranks of men, not ministers and

other public persons only, but the whole body and community of the people, thereby engaging such droves of poor ignorant persons to they know not what, and, to speak freely, to such a hodge-podge of various concernments, religious and civil, as church discipline and government, the privileges of parliament and liberties of subjects, and condign punishment of malignants, things hard enough for the wisest and learnedest to draw the just lines of, and to give plain definitions and decisions of them, and therefore certainly as far off from the reach of poor country people's understanding, as from the true interest of their souls; and yet to tie them by a religious and sacred oath either to know all these, or to contend for them blindfold without knowing them, can there be instanced a greater oppression and tyranny over consciences than this? Certainly they that now govern in this church cannot be charged with any thing near or like unto it; for whatsoever they require of intrants to the ministry, they require neither subscriptions nor oaths of ministers already entered, and far less of the whole body of the people; and it were ingenuously done to take some notice of any point of moderation, or whatsoever else is really commendable even in those we account our greatest enemies, and not to take any part in the world for the absolute standard and unfailing rule of truth and righteousness in all things.

But oh, who would not long for the shadows of the evening, and to be at rest from all these poor childish trifling contests.

P. S. Whatsoever was the occasion of copying out the passages cited in this paper, and of adding these few thoughts that then occurred touching that subject, I would have neither of them understood as intended any way to reflect upon or judge other churches where this government is otherwise exercised; but what is here said is only *argumentum ad hominem*, and particularly adapted to the persons, and notions, and scruples we have to do withal in this church. And though this is designed to come to very few hands, yet I wish that what is

here represented were by some better way brought to the notice of such as know least of it and need it most, that, if it be possible, their extreme fervour might be somewhat allayed by this consideration, that this very form of government, which is so hateful to them, is by the Presbyterians of the neighbour kingdom accounted a thing, not only tolerable, but desirable: and I might add, that, upon due inquiry, the reformed churches abroad will be found in a great part much of the same opinion; yea, I am not afraid to say yet further, that I think there is good reason to believe, that it were not only lawful for these that now govern in this church, but, if prejudice hindered not, might prove expedient and useful for the good of the church itself, that they did use in many instances a little more authority than they do, and yet might still be very far off from proud and tyrannical domination, never applying their power to obstruct what is good, but to advance it, and not at all against the truth, but always for it, and while they do so, the atheism and profaneness that abounds cannot reasonably be imputed to the nature of the government, as too commonly it is by some, but rather to the schism that is made by withdrawing and dividing from it: for there is not a greater enemy in the world to the power of religion than the wranglings and bitter contentions that are caused about the external forms of it. Εἰρήνη φίλη, εἰρήνη φίλη, ὁπότε ἡμᾶς κατέλιπες, as Nazianzen pathetically begins one of his orations for peace. I confess I have sometime wondered to see some wise and good men, after all that can be said to them, make so great reckoning of certain metaphysical exceptions against some little words and formalities of difference in the government, and set so little a value upon so great a thing as is the peace of the church. Oh when shall the loud and harsh noises of our debates be turned to the sweeter sound of united prayers for this blessed peace, that we might cry with one heart and voice to the God of peace, who alone can give it, *Pacem te poscimus omnes:* and if we be real supplicants for it, we would beware of being the disappointers of our own desires,

and of obstructing the blessing we pray for, and therefore would mainly study a temper receptive of it, and that is, great meekness and charity; and certainly whatsoever party or opinion we follow in this matter, the badge by which we must be known to the followers of Jesus Christ is this, that we love one another, and that law unquestionably is of divine right, and therefore would not be broken by bitter passion and revilings, and rooted hatreds one against another for things about which the right is in dispute betwixt us; and however that be, are we christians? Then doubtless the things wherein we agree are incomparably greater than these wherein we disagree, and therefore in all reason should be more powerful to unite us, than the other to divide us. But to restrain myself, and stop here, if we love both our own and the church's peace, there be two things I conceive we should most carefully avoid, the bestowing of too great zeal upon small things, and too much confidence of opinion upon doubtful things: it is a mad thing to rush on hard and boldly in the dark, and we all know what kind of person it is of whom Solomon says, *That he rages and is confident.*

LETTER II.

Sir,

The question betwixt us, is not concerning bishops governing absolutely by themselves and their delegates, but concerning bishops governing in conjunction with presbyters in presbyteries and synods, of which we affirm; that it is neither contrary to the Scriptures, nor the example of the primitive church, but most agreeable to both: if any think otherwise, let them produce their evidences of Scripture and antiquity. If they say, it is not enough, to make such a form lawful, that it is not contrary to Scripture, but there ought to

be an express command or rule in Scripture to warrant it, they will sure be so just, as to be subject to the same law themselves. Let them then produce such an express command or rule for their own model of kirk-sessions, presbyteries, synods provincial and national, and a commission of the kirk in their several dependencies and subordinations for the ordinary and constant government and exercise of discipline in the church, and the necessary changing of the moderators in these meetings, excepting only that of the kirk-session, wherein the minister is constantly to moderate; for without such an express rule as this, a bishop or fixed president may very well consist with that whole frame they contend for; and it is really and actually so at this present in this church, and they stand so much the rather obliged to bring a clear command for these judicatories, and their subordinations, because they affirm them to be of unquestionable divine right, and the very kingdom of Christ upon earth, and the only lawful and absolutely necessary government of the christian church, whereas the assertors of other forms do not usually speak so big. If they shall say, they are not against a fixed president or bishop, or call him what you will (for to contest about names, especially in so grave a matter, is trivial and childish), but that the question is about their power, then we beg that it may be so. Let that be all the question betwixt us, and then we hope the controversy will be quickly ended; for we trust we shall be found not at all desirous to usurp or affect any undue power, but rather to abate of that power which is reasonable, and conform even to primitive episcopacy, than that a schism should continue in this church upon that score. But be it supposed, that bishops do stretch their power somewhat beyond their line, let all the world judge, whether ministers are for that engaged to leave their station and withdraw from those meetings of the church, which themselves approve of, for the exercise of discipline, yea and (as many of them have done) to separate from the public worship, and whole communion of the church, because of some

degree of wrong done them (as they think in that point of power), or whether they had not sufficiently acquitted themselves, and discharged their consciences by free declaring of their opinion concerning that matter, and modestly desiring the redress of it; and patiently waiting for it, though it be not presently redressed, and continuing in the performance of their own duty to their power, though others above them, or about them, do transgress theirs, or seem at least to them to do so; otherwise, if we think ourselves obliged for every thing that is, or that we judge faulty in other persons, or in the frame of things, to relinquish either the communion of it, or our station in it, what will there be but endless swarms of separations and divisions in any church under the sun.

But there is one thing in this business of ours that sticks after all the rest—the covenant. As to that, waiving all the irregularities of it, though so many and so great, that in the judgment of divers, both wise and good men, they seem to annul the obligation of it, suppose it still to bind all that took it, and suppose likewise, that the present episcopacy in this church is that same that was abjured in that covenant; yet the article relating thereto obliges each one only to this, to endeavour within their calling and station, if such an episcopacy shall be introduced and continued against their will. But the truth is, if men would have the patience to inquire into it, and consider the thing without prejudice and partiality, this our episcopacy will be found not to be the same with that abjured in that covenant: for that is the government of bishops and archbishops absolutely by themselves and their delegates, chancellors, archdeacons, officials, &c. as it is expressed in the very words of the article, and was on purpose so expressed, to difference that frame from other forms of episcopacy, and particularly from that which is exercised by bishops jointly with presbyters in presbyteries and synods, and that is it which is now used in this church. And that the presbyterians in England do generally take notice of this difference, and to that

degree, as to account the one model contrary to the covenant, and the other not contrary to it, but very well agreeing with it, is a thing that none can deny, nor any that uses diligence to inquire can be ignorant of, for it is clear in divers treatises extant in print. These things, to my best discerning, are truths; and if they be indeed so, I am sure are pertinent truths, toward the healing of our sad divisions; but if any like to be contentious, I wish I could say of this church, we have no such custom: but this certainly may be said, that there is no custom doth more disedify the churches of God and less become the followers of the Prince of peace. I shall only add one word which I am sure is undeniable, and I think is very considerable, that he that cannot join with the present frame of this church, could not have lived in the communion of the christian church in the time of the first most famous general assembly of it, the Council of Nice, yea (to go no higher up, though safely I might) he must as certainly have separated from the whole catholic church in the days of the holy bishop and martyr, Cyprian, upon this very scruple of the government, as Novatus did upon another occasion.

Dr. DODDRIDGE'S PREFACE*.

When Mr. Wilson undertook to publish several pieces of Archbishop Leighton, from the manuscripts in which they had so long lain concealed, having heard of the high esteem I have long professed for the writings of that excellent person, he entreated me that I would revise them, and if I approve the publication, would introduce them into the world by a recommendatory preface. The last of these requests I absolutely refused, knowing how very unworthy I am to pretend, by my suffrage, to add any thing to the reputation and acceptance of what came from the pen of so eminently great and good a man; and the more I know of him, and of myself, the more deeply sensible I must be of his. But with the former request I cheerfully complied, though my various and important business would have furnished a very plausible excuse for declining it. I apprehended that these pieces were not very large, and I knew that, like all the other remains of our incomparable Author, they were not designed for the press; so that it was probable they were written in a very hasty manner, considering how well he knew the

* Drawn up for the Edition of Archbishop Leighton's Expository Works, in two volumes, octavo, published by David Wilson, Edinburgh, 1748.

value of time, and how entirely he was superior to popular applause in all his compositions for the pulpit, as most of these were. The numberless errors which I had observed in the first edition of all his *English* works, by which the sense of many passages is absolutely destroyed, and that of scores and hundreds very much obscured, made me the more ready to attempt the paying this little tribute of respect to his memory, which no words or actions can fully express; and I was morally certain, that whatever came from such a pen would be so entertaining and improving, that I could not fail of being immediately and abundantly rewarded for whatever pains it might cost me to prepare it for the public.

When these manuscripts came to my hands, I found new reasons to be satisfied with the task I had undertaken, which indeed was welcome to me in proportion to the degree in which I perceived it must be laborious. The papers which were sent me, were copies of others, which I suppose were transcribed from short-hand notes, which some skilful writer had happily taken from the Archbishop's mouth. They were beyond comparison more inaccurate than those of his printed works, which are most remarkably so; and yet they contained such inimitable traces of sweet natural eloquence, and of genuine and lively piety, as speak the author far more certainly, than the most exact resemblance of what was known to be his hand-writing could possibly have done.

Besides a large collection of letters, of which I shall afterwards speak, the papers consisted of his medita-

tions and expositions on Psalm xxxix., on part of Rom. xii., and the whole sixth of Isaiah. On this last sublime and instructive portion of scripture, there were three distinct expositions, delivered, as I suppose, at different places; the latter being, so far as I could judge, supplemental to the former, yet so that additions were made to almost every verse, and sometimes the same things which had been said before, expressed in a different manner. I judged it consistent with the strictest fidelity owing to the works of so illustrious a person, (which absolutely forbade my adding or diminishing any thing) to divide them, and incorporate them into one whole, which could not possibly be done without transcribing the pieces, omitting those passages in the former, that were afterwards more copiously or more correctly expressed in the latter, and inserting here and there a line or two, by way of connexion, to prevent those disagreeable chasms which would otherwise have defaced much of its beauty. For the rest, the reader may assure himself, that if (which I cannot doubt) these papers came genuine into my hand, they are now entirely so, in every sentence and in every clause; for in those very few places where the sense was to me absolutely unintelligible, and the construction incurably ungrammatical, I chose rather to drop such imperfect fragments, than by uncertain additions of my own, to run the risk of imputing to the good Archbishop what I was not sure he ever wrote. Had these fragments contained hints of any things curious in criticism, history, or controversy of any kind, I would have published them apart, at the end of these volumes:

but as they were very few, and like the rest of his writings, entirely of a devotional and practical nature, I thought it would have been a formality nearly bordering upon impertinence, to have collected and inserted them in such a manner.

The Ethico-critical meditations on the iv., xxxii., and cxxx. Psalms, abound with so many charming sentiments and expressions, that I could not but desire the English reader should share in part of the pleasure they had given me. I have therefore taken care they should be faithfully translated, and have reviewed the version with as much accuracy as my other engagements would allow. It is indeed impossible to transfuse the inimitable elegance and strength of the original into any translation: but he who is incapable of the pleasure of using that, will, I hope, be glad to enjoy the benefit of such eminently pious reflections, though under the disadvantage of a dress much less beautiful and ornamental.

When this part of the design was executed, I was insensibly, by an ambiguity of expression in the proposals printed at Edinburgh, led into another labour, much greater than I at first imagined it would have proved, I mean that of correcting the quarto edition of the incomparable Commentary upon the first epistle of Peter, which I may venture to pronounce the most faulty piece of printing I ever remember to have seen in any language. At first, I intended only to have noted those gross mistakes which quite pervert what any person of common penetration must see to have been the original sense, and yet are taken no notice of

in the erroneous table of *errata*. But afterwards considering what an embarrassment it is to common readers to see commas, colons, and periods placed almost in a promiscuous disorder, without any regard to their proper signification, which is the case here, at least in every ten lines, I determined to go over the whole, pen in hand, and correct every page as I would have done a proof from the press.

While I was thus employed, I observed that the confusion which many have complained of in the Archbishop's method, and which I myself really thought matter of some just complaint too, was frequently the consequence of omitting the numeral marks, which should denote the subordination of heads, and this where some of them are inserted, as if on purpose to increase the perplexity. And it also very frequently results from the neglect of giving a proper view at first of the method proposed, and which was worst of all, in not a few places, from placing the number of the head, instead of the head itself. This perhaps was done with design in the first copy, to save the trouble of writing it over again; but it is extremely inconvenient to the reader, as it most naturally leads him to mistake the first sentence of the enlargement, for the head it is intended to illustrate.

This is a remark which is applicable to many of our Author's sermons; and I wish it had been more constantly attended to in that valuable edition of them published by Mr. Wilson at Edinburgh two years ago, in comparison of which, nevertheless, it is certain that neither of the former are to be named. I thought it no

unwarrantable liberty at all, but a high point of justice, to supply with my pen what is so evidently deficient, and I hope I shall not be condemned for venturing, as I was expressly desired to do, here and there to exchange a Scots word or phrase for an English one, certainly of the same signification, and more generally understood. I thought that to have distinguished all these corrections by different characters, crotchets, or inverted commas, would have injured the beauty of the impressions, and might have looked like a little affectation of making a vain parade of what I have done. If any are curious enough to desire exactly to know it, they may get surer information, by comparing this edition with the former, by which they may judge of the little, but, as I thought, very necessary freedoms taken with the manuscript pieces. And if any perceive, as I suppose most observant readers that make the comparison will, that the Commentary upon Peter now reads in a much rounder, clearer, and pleasanter manner than it before did; they will only reflect how much a multitude of little negligencies and errors, each of them seeming in itself minutely and inconsiderably small, may affect the beauty, character, and use of a work in which they are found.

On the whole, the preparing these volumes for the press hath generally taken up a little of my time in the intervals of other business, daily for several months; but I am far from repenting the labour I have bestowed upon it. The delight and edification which I have found in the writings of this *wonderful man*, for such I must deliberately call him, would have been a full

equivalent for my pains, separate from all prospect of that effect which they might have upon others. For truly I know not that I have ever spent a quarter of an hour in reviewing any of them, but even amidst that interruption which a critical examination of the copy would naturally give, I have felt some impressions which I could wish always to retain. I can hardly forbear saying, as a considerable philosopher and eminent divine, with whom I have the honour of an intimate correspondence and friendship, said to me in a letter long ago*, and when my acquaintance with our Author's works was but beginning, "There is a spirit in Archbishop Leighton I never met with in any human writings; nor can I read many lines in them without being moved."

Indeed it would be difficult for me to say where, but in the sacred oracles, I have ever found such heart-affecting lessons of simplicity and humility, candour and benevolence, exalted piety, without the least tincture of enthusiasm, and an entire mortification to every earthly interest, without any mixture of splenetic resentment. Nor can I ever sufficiently admire that artless manner in which he lays open, as it were, his whole breast to the reader, and shows, without seeming to be at all conscious of it himself, all the various graces that can adorn and ennoble the Christian, running like so many veins of precious ore in the rich mine where they grew. And hence, if I mistake not, is that wonderful energy of his discourses, obvious as they seem, un-

* April 10, 1740. The Reverend Dr. Henry Miles, F.R.S.

adorned as they really are, which I have observed to be owned by persons of eminent piety in the most different ranks, and amidst all the variety of education and capacity that can be imagined. As every eye is struck by consummate beauty, though in the plainest dress, and the sight of such an object impresses much more than any laboured description of complexion, features, or air, or any harangue on the nicest rules of proportion which could come into consideration; so, in the works of this *great adept in true Christianity*, we do not so much hear of goodness, as see it in its most genuine traces; see him a living image of his Divine Master, for such indeed his writings show, I had almost said, demonstrate him to have been, by such internal characters as surely a bad man could not counterfeit, and no good man can so much as suspect.

Where the matter is so remarkably excellent, a wise and pious reader will not be over solicitous about the style; yet I think he will find it, in these compositions, far above any reasonable contempt or censure. When I consider what the prevailing taste was a century ago in this respect, I have often wondered at the many true beauties of expression that occur in these pieces, and the general freedom from those false and fanciful ornaments, if they are to be called ornaments, which occur in contemporary authors. On the whole, the style wonderfully suits the sentiments; and however destitute of the flights of oratory, has such a dignity and force mingled with that simplicity, which is to be sure its chief characteristic; so that on the whole, it has often reminded me of that soft and sweet eloquence of Ulysses,

which Homer* describes as falling like flakes of snow; and if I might be allowed to pursue the similitude, I could add, like that, it penetrates deep into the mind too, and tends to enrich and fructify it.

It is chiefly the practical preacher that shines in these lectures, yet it seems to me that the judicious expositor will also appear, and appear most to the most competent judges. There is a sort of criticism on the sacred writings, which none but an eminently good man can attain; and if I am at all capable of judging concerning it, it remarkably reigns here. We find, indeed, little of that laborious sifting of words and syllables, in which some have worn out so much time and pains, if not to no purpose at all, for I will not assert that, at least to purposes very low and inconsiderable, when compared with those which our Author pursues and attains. The reader will, I think, find great light poured on many very difficult passages, especially in the First Epistle of Peter, in a very masterly manner, and often by a few weighty words. But these hints are generally very short, for the good Author appears to have lopped off every thing as superfluous, which did not immediately tend to make his readers better, or rather to have had a heart so entirely possessed with this desire, that nothing else ever offered itself to his view. Whatever of an ornamental kind is to be found in these practical parts of the work, which certainly constitute more than six-sevenths of the whole, appears to have been quite unlaboured and unsought; but it conduces much to our entertainment, and I hope in its

* Καὶ, ἔπεα νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότα χειμερίῃσιν.—Il. iii. v. 222.

consequence to our improvement, that the Author had naturally a very fine imagination; the consequence of which is, that his works abound with a charming variety of beautiful figures, springing up most naturally from his subjects, and so adding some graces of novelty to thoughts in themselves most obvious and common.

On the whole, I cannot but hope that God will be pleased to bless the publication of these pieces, in these circumstances, as an occasion of reviving a sense of religion, and promoting the interest of true Christianity. It has appeared to me a memorable event, that when the extreme modesty of Archbishop Leighton had been inexorable to all the entreaties of his many friends, to print something during his life, so many of his precious remains should with such solicitude be gleaned up after death, and some of them more than threescore years after it; and that they should be read with such high esteem and delight, as it is plain many of them have been, by persons of the most different denominations throughout Great Britain. I am very sensible of it as an honour done to me in the course of Divine Providence, that the task I have here executed should so very unexpectedly be devolved upon me. I have no property at all in the work, nor the least secular interest in its success: what I have done was entirely the result of love to the Author's memory, and concern for the public good; but I shall be gloriously rewarded, if the labour I have bestowed upon it be the occasion of promoting those great ends which animated the discourses and actions of the holy man who has now dwelt so long among the blessed inhabitants of that world after which

he so ardently aspired, while yet amongst mortals. And let me be permitted to add, that I have some secret hope this publication, in these circumstances, may, among other good effects, promote that spirit of catholicism, for which our Author was so remarkable, and extend it among various denominations of Christians, in the northern and southern parts of our island. If the sincerest language or actions can express the disposition of the heart, it will here be apparent, that a diversity of judgment with regard to Episcopacy, and several forms both of discipline and worship connected with it, have produced in my mind no alienation, no indifference towards Archbishop Leighton, nor prevented my delighting in his works, and profiting by them. In this respect I trust my brethren in Scotland will, for their own sake, and that of religion in general, show the like candour. On the other side, as I have observed with great pleasure and thankfulness how much many of the established clergy in this part of Britain are advancing in moderation towards their dissenting brethren, I am fully assured they will not like these excellent pieces the worse for having passed through my hand. It is truly my grief that any thing should divide me from the fullest communion with those to whom I am united in bonds of as tender affection as I bear to any of my fellow Christians. And it is my daily prayer, that God will by his gentle, but powerful, influence on our minds, mutually dispose us more and more for such a further union, as may most effectually consolidate the Protestant cause, establish the throne of our gracious Sovereign, remove the scandals our divisions have occa-

sioned, and strengthen our hands in those efforts by which we are attempting, and might then, I hope, more successfully attempt the service of our common Christianity. In the mean time, I desire most sincerely to bless God for any advances that are made towards it; and I cannot forbear to illustrate and confirm my thoughts on this head, by inserting the elegant words of a most worthy member of the Church of England, well known in the learned world, as I have lately had the honour of receiving them from his own pen. I conceal his name, and therefore hope it is no violation of the laws of friendship, to insert at large a passage from a familiar letter, which, if it warms my reader's breast as it did mine, will be not only an entertainment, but a blessing to many, and which is as suitable a conclusion of this preface, as if it had been written in that view. "I am glad," says he, "that "Christianity begins to be so well understood and "taught by so many men of parts and learning in all "sects, the fruits of which appear in a candour and "charity unknown to all ages of the Church, except "the primitive, I had almost said, the apostolic age. "Does not this give you a prospect, though perhaps "still very distant, of the completion of the famous "prophecy that speaks of the *lion and the lamb lying* "*down together* in the kingdom of the Messiah? Lions "there have been hitherto in all churches, but too "many fierce, greedy, and blood-thirsty lions, though "often disguised like lambs, and some lambs there "have been, simple enough to think it expedient for "the flock, to assume the habit and terror of lions;

" but I hope they now begin to undeceive themselves, " and to consider Christianity as intending to bring " back the world to that state of innocence which it " enjoyed before the fall, when in one and the same " paradise, to use the words of Milton,

> ——————————— Frisking play'd
> All beasts of th' earth, since wild, and of all chase,
> In wood or wilderness, forest or den.
> Sporting the lion ramp'd, and in his paw
> Dandled the kid.——

" To attain this happy state," continues this amiable writer, " all Christians should unite their endeavours, " and instead of looking out for and insisting upon " points of difference and distinction, seek for those " only in which they *do* or *may* agree. They may at " least *sow the seeds* of peace and unity, though they " should not live to *reap the fruits* of it in this world. " *Blessed are the peace-makers,* says the Prince of peace, " *for they shall be called the children of God.* An ap- " pellation infinitely more honourable than that of " pastor, bishop, archbishop, patriarch, cardinal, or " pope, attended with a recompense infinitely surpass- " ing the richest revenues of the highest ecclesiastical " dignity." I join my hearty wishes and prayers with those of my much esteemed friend, that we may all more and more deserve this character, and attain this its reward.

P. DODDRIDGE.

Northampton, April 26, 1748.

A

PRACTICAL COMMENTARY UPON THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

ST. PETER.

A

PRACTICAL COMMENTARY

UPON THE

FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

S T. P E T E R.

Chapter I. Verse 1.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

THE grace of God in the heart of man, is a tender plant in a strange unkindly soil; and therefore cannot well prosper and grow, without much care and pains, and that of a skilful hand, and which hath the art of cherishing it: for this end hath God given the constant ministry of the word to his Church, not only for the first work of conversion, but also for confirming and increasing of his grace in the hearts of his children.

And though the extraordinary ministers of the Gospel, the Apostles, had principally the former for their charge—the converting of unbelievers, Jews and Gentiles, and so the planting of churches, to be after kept, and watered by others (as the apostle intimates, 1 Cor. iii. 6); yet did they not neglect the other work of strengthening the grace of God begun in the new converts of those times, both by revisiting them, and exhorting them in person, as they could, and by the supply of their writing to them when absent.

And the benefit of this extends (not by accident, but by the purpose and good providence of God) to the Church of God in all succeeding ages.

This excellent Epistle (full of evangelical doctrine and apostolical authority) is a brief, and yet very clear summary both of the consolations and instructions needful for the encouragement and direction of a Christian in his journey to heaven, elevating his thoughts and desires to that happiness, and strengthening him against all opposition in the way, both that of corruption within, and temptations and afflictions from without.

The heads of doctrine contained in it are many, but the main that are most insisted on, are these three, *faith*, *obedience*, and *patience;* to establish them in believing, to direct them in doing, and to comfort them in suffering. And because the first is the ground-work and support of the other two, this first chapter is much occupied with persuading them of the truth of the mystery which they had received and did believe, *viz.*, their redemption and salvation by Christ Jesus; that inheritance of immortality bought by his blood for them, and the evidence and stability of their right and title to it.

And then he uses this belief, this assurance of the glory to come, as the great persuasive to the other two, both to holy obedience, and constant patience, since nothing can be too much either to forego or undergo, either to do or to suffer, for the attainment of that blessed state.

And as from the consideration of that object and matter of the hope of believers, he encourages to patience, and exhorteth to holiness in this chapter in general, so, in the following chapters, he expresses more particularly both the universal and special duties of Christians, both in doing and suffering, often setting before those to whom he wrote, the matchless example of the Lord Jesus, and the greatness of their engagement to follow him.

In the first two verses, we have the *Inscription* and *Salutation*, in the usual style of the Apostolic Epistles.

The *Inscription* hath the *author* and the *address*,—from whom, and to whom. The *Author* of this *Epistle* is designated by his *name*—Peter; and his *calling*—an apostle.

We shall not insist upon his name, that it was imposed by Christ, or what is its signification; this the Evangelists teach us, John i. 42, Matt. xvi. 18.

By that which is spoken of him in divers passages of the Gospel, he is very remarkable amongst the Apostles, both for his graces and his failings; eminent in zeal and courage, and yet stumbling oft in his forwardness, and once grossly falling. And these, by the providence of God, being recorded in Scripture, give a check to the excess of Rome's conceit concerning this apostle. Their extolling and exalting him above the rest, is not for his cause, much less to the honour of his Lord and master Jesus Christ, for he is injured and dishonoured by it; but it is in favour of themselves. As Alexander distinguished his two friends, that the one was a friend of Alexander, the other a friend of the *king*, the preferment which they give this Apostle is not in good will to Peter, but in the desire of *primacy*. But whatsoever he was, they would be much in pain to prove Rome's right to it by succession. And if ever it had any such right, we may confidently say it has forfeited it long ago, by departing from St. Peter's footsteps, and from his faith, and retaining too much those things wherein he was faulty: namely,

His unwillingness to hear of, and consent to, Christ's sufferings,—his *Master, spare thyself*, or *Far be it from thee*,—in those they are like him; for thus they would disburden and exempt the Church from the cross, from the real cross or afflictions, and, instead of that, have nothing but painted, or carved, or gilded crosses; these they are content to embrace, and worship too, but cannot endure to hear of the other. Instead of the cross of affliction, they make the *crown* or *mitre* the badge of their Church, and will have it known by prosperity, and outward pomp; and so turn the church militant, into the Church triumphant, not considering that it is

Babylon's voice, not the Church's, *I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow.*

Again, they are like him in his saying on the mount at Christ's transfiguration, when he knew not what he said, *It is good to be here:* so they have little of the true glory of Christ, but the false glory of that monarchy on their seven hills: *It is good to be here,* say they.

Again, in their undue striking with the sword, not the enemies, as he, but the faithful friends and servants of Jesus Christ. But to proceed.

We see here Peter's office or title,—*an apostle;* not *chief bishop.* Some in their glossing have been so impudent as to add that beside the text; though in chap. v. ver. 4, he gives that title to Christ alone, and to himself only *fellow elder;* and here, not *prince of the apostles,* but *an apostle,* restored and re-established after his fall, by repentance, and by Christ himself after his own death and resurrection. (See John xxi.) Thus we have in our Apostle a singular instance of human frailty on the one side, and of the sweetness of divine grace on the other. Free and rich grace it is indeed, that forgives and swallows up multitudes of sins, of the greatest sins, not only sins before conversion, as to St. Paul, but foul offences committed after conversion, as to David, and to this Apostle; not only once raising them from the dead, but when they fall, stretching out the same hand, and raising them again, and restoring them to their station, and comforting them in it by his *free Spirit,* as David prays; not only to cleanse polluted clay, but to work it into vessels of honour, yea, of the most defiled shape to make the most refined vessels, not vessels of honour of the lowest sort, but for the highest and most honourable services, vessels to bear his own precious name to the nations; making the most unworthy and the most unfit, fit by his grace to be his messengers.

Of Jesus Christ.] Both as the beginning and the end of his apostleship, as Christ is called *Alpha* and *Omega;* chosen and called by him, and called to this—to preach him, and salvation wrought by him.

Apostle of Jesus Christ.] Sent by him and the message no other than his name, to make that known. And what this apostleship was then, after some extraordinary way, befitting these first times of the Gospel, the ministry of the word in ordinary is now, and therefore an employment of more difficulty and excellency than is usually conceived by many, not only of those who look upon it, but even of those who are exercised in it;—to be ambassadors for the greatest of kings, and upon no mean employment, that great treaty of peace and reconcilement betwixt him and mankind. (V. 2 Cor. v. 20.)

This epistle is directed to the *Elect*, who are described here by their *temporal* and by their *spiritual* conditions. The one hath very much dignity and comfort in it; the other hath neither, but rather the contrary of both; and therefore the Apostle intending their comfort, mentions the one but in passing, to signify to whom particularly he sent his Epistle; but the other is that which he would have their thoughts dwell upon, and therefore he prosecutes it in his following discourse. And if we look to the order of the words, their temporal condition is but interjected; for it is said, *To the Elect*, first, and then, *To the strangers scattered*, &c. And he would have this as it were drowned in the other—*According to the foreknowledge of God the Father.*

That those dispersed strangers who dwelt in the countries here named, were Jews, appears, if we look to the foregoing Epistle, where the same word is used, and expressly appropriated to the Jews. (James i. 1.) St. Peter in Gal. ii. is called *an Apostle of the circumcision*, as exercising his apostleship most towards them; and there is in some passages of this Epistle, somewhat which, though belonging to all Christians, yet hath, in the strain and way of expression, a particular fitness to the believing Jews, as being particularly verified in them, which was spoken of their nation, chap. ii. ver. 9, 10.

Some argue from the name, Strangers, that the Gentiles are here meant, which seems not to be; for proselyte Gentiles were indeed called strangers in Jerusalem, and by the Jews;

but were not the Jews strangers in these places—Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia?—Not strangers dwelling together in a prosperous flourishing condition, as a well-planted colony, but *strangers of the dispersion*, scattered to and fro. *Their dispersion* was partly, first by the Assyrian captivity, and after that by the Babylonish, and by the invasion of the Romans; and it might be in these very times increased by the believing Jews flying from the hatred and persecution raised against them at home.

The places here mentioned, through which they were dispersed, are all in Asia. So Asia here, is Asia the *Lesser*. Where it is to be observed, that some of those who heard St. Peter, Acts ii. 9, are said to be of those regions. And if any of the number then converted were amongst these dispersed, the comfort was no doubt the more grateful from the hand of the same Apostle by whom they were first converted; but this is only conjecture. Though divine truths are to be received equally from every minister alike, yet it must be acknowledged that there is something (we know not what to call it) of a more acceptable reception of those who at first were the means of bringing men to God, than of others; like the opinion some have of physicians whom they love.

The Apostle comforts these strangers of this dispersion, by the spiritual union which they obtained by *effectual calling;* and so calls off their eyes from their outward, dispersed, and despised condition, to look above that, as high as the spring of their happiness, the *free love* and *election* of God. *Scattered* in the countries, and yet gathered in God's election, chosen or picked out; strangers to men amongst whom they dwelt, but *known* and *foreknown* to God; removed from their own country, to which men have naturally an unalterable affection, but *heirs* made of a better (as follows, ver. 3, 4); and having within them the evidence both of eternal election and of that expected salvation, the *Spirit of holiness* (ver. 2). At the best a Christian is but a stranger here, set him where you will, as our Apostle teacheth after; and it is his privilege that

he is so; and when he thinks not so, he forgets and disparages himself; he descends far below his quality, when he is much taken with anything in this place of his exile.

But this is the wisdom of a Christian, when he can solace himself against the meanness of his outward condition, and any kind of discomfort attending it, with the comfortable assurance of the love of God, that he hath called him to holiness, given him some measure of it, and an endeavour after more; and by this may he conclude that he hath ordained him unto salvation. If either he is a stranger where he lives, or as a stranger deserted of his friends, and very near stripped of all outward comforts, yet may he rejoice in this, that the eternal unchangeable love of God, which is from everlasting to everlasting, is sealed to his soul. And O what will it avail a man to be compassed about with the favour of the world, to sit unmolested in his own home and possessions, and to have them very great and pleasant, to be well monied, and landed, and befriended, and yet estranged and severed from God, not having any token of his special love?

To the Elect.] The Apostle here denominates all the Christians to whom he writes, by the condition of true believers, calling them *Elect* and *Sanctified*, *&c.*, and the Apostle St. Paul writes in the same style in his Epistles to the churches. Not that all in these churches were such indeed, but because they professed to be such, and by that their profession and calling as Christians, they were obliged to be such; and as many of them as were in any measure true to that their calling and profession were really such. Besides, it would seem not unworthy of consideration, that in all probability there would be fewer false Christians, and the number of true believers would be usually greater, in the churches in those primitive times, than now in the best reformed churches: because there could not then be many of them that were from their infancy bred in the Christian faith, but the greatest part were such as, being of years of discretion, were, by the hearing of the Gospel, converted from Paganism and Judaism to the Christian religion first, and made a deliberate choice of it; to which there were

at that time no great outward encouragements, and therefore the less danger of multitudes of hypocrites, which, as vermin in summer, breed most in the time of the Church's prosperity. Though no nation or kingdom had then universally received the faith, but rather hated and persecuted it, yet were there even then amongst them, as the writings of the Apostles testify, false brethren, and inordinate walkers, and men of corrupt minds, earthly-minded, and led with a spirit of envy and contention and vain-glory.

Although the question that is moved concerning the necessary qualifications of all the members of a true visible church, can no way (as I conceive) be decided from the inscriptions of the Epistles; yet, certainly, they are useful to teach Christians and Christian churches what they ought to be, and what their holy profession requires of them, and sharply to reprove the gross unlikeness and inconformity that is in the most part of men, to the description of Christians. As there be some that are too strait in their judgment concerning the being and nature of the visible church, so certainly the greatest part of churches are too loose in their practice.

From the dissimilitude betwixt our churches and those, we may make this use of reproof, that if an apostolical Epistle were to be directed to us, it ought to be inscribed, to the ignorant, profane, malicious, &c. As he who, at the hearing of the Gospel read, said, "Either this is not the Gospel, or we are not Christians," so, either these characters, given in the inscription of these Epistles, are not true characters, or we are not true Christians.

Ver. 2. Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

In this verse we have their *condition* and the *causes* of it.—Their condition *sanctified* and *justified;* the former expressed by *obedience*, the latter, by *sprinkling of the blood of Christ.* The causes, 1. *Eternal election*, 2. *The execution of that*

decree, their *effectual calling*, which (I conceive) is meant by *Election* here, the selecting them out of the world, and joining them to the fellowship of the children of God. So John xv. 19. The former, *Election*, is particularly ascribed to God the Father, the latter, to the Holy Spirit; and the *blood of Jesus Christ* the Son of God, is here assigned as the cause of their *justification;* and so the whole Trinity concurring dignify them with this their spiritual and happy estate.

First, I shall discourse of these separately, and then of their connexion. I. Of the State itself, and 1. of *Justification*, though named last.

This *sprinkling* has respect to the rite of the legal purification by the sprinkling of blood; and that appositely, for these rites of sprinkling and blood did all point out this blood and this sprinkling, and exhibited this true ransom of souls, which was only shadowed by them.

The use and end of sprinkling were *purification* and *expiation*, because sin merited death, and the pollutions and stains of human nature were by sin. Such is the pollution, that it can be no manner of way washed off but by blood. (Heb. ix. 22.) Neither is there any blood able to purge from sin, except the most precious blood of Jesus Christ, which is called (Acts xx. 28) the *blood of God*.

That the stain of sin can be washed off only by blood, intimates that it merits death; and that no blood, but that of the Son of God, can do it, intimates, that this stain merits eternal death; and it had been our portion, except the death of the eternal Lord of life had freed us from it.

Filthiness needs sprinkling; *guiltiness* (such as deserves death) needs sprinkling of blood; and the death it deserves, being everlasting death, the blood must be the blood of Christ, the eternal Lord of life, dying to free us from the sentence of death.

The soul (as the body) hath its life, its health, its purity, and the contrary of these,—its death, diseases, deformities, and

impurity, which belong to it as to their first subject, and to the body by participation.

The soul and body of all mankind are stained by the pollution of sin. The impure leprosy of the soul is not a spot outwardly, but wholly inward; hence, as the corporal leprosy was purified by the sprinkling of blood, so is this. Then, by reflecting, we see how all this that the Apostle St. Peter expresseth is necessary to justification. 1. Christ the Mediator betwixt God and man, is God and man. 2. A mediator not only interceding, but also satisfying (Eph. ii. 16). 3. This satisfaction doth not reconcile us, unless it be applied: therefore there is not only mention of blood, but the *sprinkling* of it. The Spirit by faith sprinkleth the soul, as with hyssop, wherewith the sprinkling was made: this is it of which the Prophet speaks, (Isa. lii. 15,) *So shall he sprinkle many nations;* and which the Apostle to the Hebrews prefers above all legal sprinklings, (Chap. ix. 12, 13, 14,) both as to its duration, and as to the excellency of its effects.

Men are not easily convinced and persuaded of the deep stain of sin, and that no other laver can fetch it out, but the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Some who have moral resolutions of amendment, dislike at least gross sins, and purpose to avoid them, and it is to them cleanness enough to reform in those things; but they consider not what becomes of the guiltiness they have contracted already, and how that shall be purged, how their natural pollution shall be taken away. Be not deceived in this: it is not a transient sigh, or a light word, or a wish of *God forgive me;* no, nor the highest current of repentance, nor that which is the truest evidence of repentance, amendment; it is none of these that purify in the sight of God, and expiate wrath; they are all imperfect and stained themselves, cannot stand and answer for themselves, much less be of value to counterpoise the former guilt of sin. The very tears of the purest repentance, unless they be sprinkled with this blood, are impure; all our washings, without this, are but

washings of the blackmoor, it is labour in vain. (Jer. ii. 22. Job ix. 30, 31.) There are none truly purified by the blood of Christ, who do not endeavour after purity of heart and conversation; but yet it is the blood of Christ by which they are all made fair, and there is no spot in them. Here it is said, *Elect to obedience;* but because that obedience is not perfect, there must be sprinkling of the blood too. There is nothing in religion further out of nature's reach, and out of its liking and believing, than the doctrine of redemption by a Saviour, and a crucified Saviour,—by Christ, and by his blood, first shed on the cross in his suffering, and then sprinkled on the soul by his Spirit. It is easier to make men sensible of the necessity of repentance and amendment of life, (though that is very difficult,) than of this purging by the sprinkling of this precious blood. Did we see how needful Christ is to us, we should esteem and love him more.

It is not by the hearing of Christ and of his blood in the doctrine of the Gospel; it is not by the sprinkling of water, even that water which is the sign of this blood, without the blood itself and the sprinkling of it. Many are present where it is sprinkled, and yet have no portion in it. Look to this, that this blood be sprinkled on your souls, that the destroying angel may pass by you. *There is a generation* (not some few, but a generation) deceived in this; they are their own deceivers, *pure in their own eyes.* (Prov. xxx. 12.) How earnestly doth David pray, *Wash me, purge me with hyssop!* Though bathed in tears, (Psal vi. 6,) that satisfied not:—*Wash thou me.* This is the honourable condition of the saints, that they are purified and consecrated unto God by this sprinkling; yea, they have on *long white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb.* There is mention indeed of *great tribulation*, but there is a double comfort joined with it. 1. They come out of it; that tribulation hath an end. And, 2. They pass from that to glory; for they have on the robe of *candidates, long white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb*, washed white in blood. As for this blood, it is nothing but purity and spotlessness,

being stained with no sin, and besides hath that virtue to take away the stain of sin, where it is sprinkled. *My well beloved is white and ruddy,* saith the spouse; thus in his death, ruddy by bloodshed, white by innocence and purity of that blood.

Shall they then, who are purified by this blood, return to live among the swine, and tumble with them in the puddle? What gross injury were this to themselves, and to that blood by which they are cleansed! They who are chosen to this *sprinkling*, are likewise chosen to *obedience.* This blood purifieth the heart; yea, this blood *purgeth our consciences from dead works to serve the living God.* (Heb. ix. 14.)

2. Of their sanctification. *Elect unto obedience.*] It is easily understood to whom. When obedience to God is expressed by the simple absolute name of obedience, it teacheth us that to him alone belongs absolute and unlimited obedience, all obedience by all creatures. It is the shame and misery of man, that he hath departed from this obedience, that we are become *sons of disobedience;* but Grace, renewing the hearts of believers, changeth their natures, and so their names, and makes them *children of obedience* (as afterwards in this chapter). As this obedience consists in the receiving Christ as our Redeemer, so also at the same time as our Lord or King; there is an entire rendering up of the whole man to his obedience. This obedience, then, of the only-begotten Jesus Christ, may well be understood not as *his actively*, as Beza interprets it, but *objectively*, as 2 Cor. x. 5. I think here it is contained, yea chiefly understood to signify that *obedience* which the Apostle in the Epistle to the Romans calls the *obedience of faith*, by which the doctrine of Christ is received, (and so Christ himself,) which uniteth the believing soul to Christ,—he sprinkles it with his blood, to the remission of sin,—and which is the root and spring of all future obedience in the Christian life.

By *obedience*, sanctification is here intimated; it signifies, then, both habitual and active obedience, renovation of heart, and conformity to the divine will. The mind is illuminated

by the Holy Ghost, to know and believe the divine will; yea, this faith is the great and chief part of obedience. (See Rom. i. 8.) The truth of the doctrine is first impressed on the mind; hence flows out pleasant obedience, and full of love; hence all the affections, and the whole body, with its members, learn to give a willing obedience, and submit unto God; whereas before they resisted him, being under the standard of Satan.

This obedience, though imperfect, yet hath a certain (if I may so say) *imperfect perfection*. It is universal in three manner of ways. 1. In the subject. 2. In the object. 3. In the duration. The whole man is subjected to the whole law, and that constantly and perseveringly.

The first universality is the cause of the other: because it is not in the tongue alone, or in the hand, &c., but has its root in the heart; therefore it doth not wither as the grass, or flower lying on the surface of the earth, but it flourishes, because rooted. And it embraces the whole law, because it arises from a reverence it has for the Lawgiver himself. Reverence, I say, but tempered with love; hence it accounts no law nor command little, or of small value, which is from God, because he is great and highly esteemed by the pious heart; no command hard, (though contrary to the flesh,) because all things are easy to love. There is the same authority in all, as St. James divinely argues; and this authority is the golden chain of all the commandments, which if broken in any link, all falls to pieces.

That this threefold perfection of obedience is not a picture drawn by fancy, is evident in David, Psal. cxix., where he subjects himself to the whole law;—his feet, ver. 105; his mouth, ver. 13; his heart, ver. 11; the whole tenor of his life, ver. 24. He subjects himself to the whole law, ver. 6, and he professes his constancy therein, in verses 16 and 33: *Teach me the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.*

II. We have the causes of the condition above described.

According to the foreknowledge of God the Father.] The exactest knowledge of things is, to know them in their causes: it is then an excellent thing, and worthy of their endeavours

who are most desirous of knowledge, to know the best things in their highest causes; and the happiest way of attaining to this knowledge, is, to possess those things, and to know them in experience. To such persons the Apostle here speaks, and sets before them the excellency of their spiritual condition, and leads them to the causes of it.

Their state is, that they are *sanctified* and *justified:* the nearest cause of both these is, Jesus Christ. He is made unto them both *righteousness* and *sanctification:* the sprinkling of his blood purifies them from guiltiness, and quickens them to obedience.

The appropriating or applying cause comes next under consideration, which is the *Holy*, and *holy-making* or *sanctifying Spirit*, the author of their selection from the world, and effectual calling unto grace.

The source of all, the appointing or decreeing cause, is *God the Father:* for though they all work equally in all, yet, in order of working, we are taught thus to distinguish and particularly to ascribe the first work of eternal election to the first person of the blessed Trinity.

In or *through sanctification.*] For to render it, *elect to the sanctification*, is strained: so then I conceive this election is their effectual calling, which is by the working of the Holy Spirit, (See 1 Cor. i. 26—28,) where *vocation* and *election* are used in the same sense: *Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh*, &c., *but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.* It is the first act of the decree of election; the beginning of its performance in those that are elected; and it is in itself a real separating of men from the profane and miserable condition of the world, and an appropriating and consecrating of a man unto God; and therefore, both in regard of its relation to election, and in regard of its own nature, it well bears that name. See Rom. viii. 28, 30; Acts ii. 47, and xiii. 48; John xv. 19.

Sanctification in a narrower sense, as distinguished from *justification*, signifieth the inherent holiness of a Christian, or his

being inclined and enabled to perform the *obedience* mentioned in this verse: but it has here a sense more large, and is co-extended with the whole work of renovation; it is the severing and separating of men to God, by his Holy Spirit, drawing them unto him; and so it comprehends justification (as here) and the first working of faith, by which the soul is justified, through its apprehending and applying the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Of the Spirit.] The word calls men externally, and by that external calling prevails with many to an external receiving and professing of religion; but if it be left alone it goes no further. It is indeed the means of sanctification and effectual calling, as John xvii. 17, *Sanctify them through thy truth;* but this it doth when the Spirit, which speaks in the word, works in the heart, and causes it to hear and obey. The spirit or soul of a man is the chief and first subject of this work, and it is but slight false work that begins not there; but the *spirit* here, is to be taken for the Spirit of God, the efficient, rather than for the spirit of man, the subject of this sanctification. And therefore our Saviour in that place prays to the Father, *that he would sanctify his own by that truth;* and this he doth by the concurrence of his Spirit with that word of truth which is the life and vigour of it, and makes it prove *the power of God unto salvation to them that believe.* It is a fit means in itself, but it is a prevailing means only when the spirit of God brings it into the heart. It is a sword, and *sharper than a two-edged sword*, fit to divide, yea, *even to the dividing of soul and spirit;* but this it doth not, unless it be in the Spirit's hand, and he apply it to this cutting and dividing. The word calls, but the Spirit draws, not severed from that word, but working in it, and by it.

It is a very difficult work to draw a soul out of the hands and strong chains of Satan, and out of the pleasing entanglements of the world, and out of its own natural perverseness, to yield up itself unto God,—to deny itself, and live to him, and

in so doing, to run against the main stream, and the current of the ungodly world without, and corruption within.

The strongest rhetoric, the most moving and persuasive way of discourse, is all too weak; the tongue of men or angels cannot prevail with the soul to free itself, and shake off all that detains it. Although it be convinced of the truth of those things that are represented to it, yet still it can and will hold out against it and say, *Non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris.*

The hand of man is too weak to pluck any soul out of the crowd of the world, and to set it in amongst the select number of believers. Only the Father of Spirits hath absolute command of spirits, *viz.*, the souls of men, to work on them as he pleaseth, and where he will. This powerful, this sanctifying Spirit knows no resistance; works sweetly, and yet strongly; it can come into the heart, whereas all other speakers are forced to stand without. That still voice within persuades more than all the loud crying without; as he that is within the house, though he speak low, is better heard and understood, than he that shouts without doors.

When the Lord himself speaks by this his Spirit to a man, selecting and calling him out of the lost world, he can no more disobey than Abraham did, when the Lord spoke to him after an extraordinary manner, to depart from his own country and kindred: *Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken to him.* (Gen. xii. 4.) There is a secret, but very powerful, virtue in a word, or look, or touch of this Spirit upon the soul, by which it is forced, not with a harsh, but a pleasing violence, and cannot choose but follow it, not unlike that of Elijah's mantle upon Elisha. How easily did the disciples forsake their callings and their dwellings to follow Christ!

The Spirit of God draws a man out of the world by a sanctified light sent into his mind, 1. Discovering to him how base and false the sweetness of sin is, which withholds men and amuses them, that they return not; and how true and sad the bitterness is, that will follow upon it . Setting before his

eyes the free and happy condition, *the glorious liberty of the sons of God,* the riches of their present enjoyment, and their far larger and assured hopes for hereafter; 3. Making the beauty of Jesus Christ visible to the soul; which straightway takes it so, that it cannot be stayed from coming to him, though its most beloved friends, most beloved sins, lie in the way, and hang about it, and cry, Will you leave us so? It will tread upon all to come within the embraces of Jesus Christ, and say with St. Paul, *I was not disobedient to* (or *unpersuaded by*) *the heavenly vision.*

It is no wonder that the godly are by some called singular and precise; they are so, singular, a few selected ones, picked out by God's own hand for himself: *Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself,* (Psalm iv. 3.) *Therefore,* saith our Saviour, *the world hates you, because I have chosen you out of the world.* For the world lies in unholiness and wickedness,—is buried in it; and as living men can have no pleasure among the dead, neither can these elected ones amongst the ungodly: they walk in the world as warily as a man or woman, neatly apparelled, would do amongst a multitude that are all sullied and bemired.

Endeavour to have this sanctifying Spirit in yourselves; pray much for it; for his promise is passed to us, that *He will give this holy Spirit to them that ask it.* And shall we be such fools as to want it, for want of asking? When we find heavy fetters on our souls, and much weakness, yea averseness to follow the voice of God calling us to his obedience, then let us pray with the Spouse, *Draw me.* She cannot go nor stir without that drawing; and yet, with it, not only goes, but runs. *We will run after thee.*

Think it not enough that you hear the word, and use the outward ordinances of God, and profess his name; for many are thus called, and yet but a few of them are chosen. There is but a small part of the world outwardly called, in comparison of the rest that is not so, and yet the number of the true elect is so small, that it gains the number of these that are called, the

name of *many*.—They who are in the visible church, and partake of external vocation, are but like a large list of names (as in civil elections is usual) out of which a small number is chosen to the dignity of true Christians, and invested into their privilege. Some men, in nomination to offices or employments, think it a worse disappointment and disgrace to have been in the list, and yet not chosen, than if their names had not been mentioned at all. Certainly, it is a greater unhappiness to have been *Not far from the kingdom of God* (as our Saviour speaks) and miss of it, than still to have remained in the furthest distance; to have been at the mouth of the haven, (the fair havens indeed,) and yet driven back and shipwrecked. Your labour is most preposterous; you seek to ascertain and make sure things that cannot be made sure, and that which is both more worth, and may be made surer than them all, you will not endeavour to make sure. Hearken to the Apostle's advice, and at length set about this in earnest, to *make your calling and election sure*. Make sure this election, as it is here, (for that is the order,) your effectual calling sure, and that will bring with it assurance of the other, the eternal election and love of God towards you, which follows to be considered.

According to the foreknowledge of God the Father.] *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning*, saith the Apostle James. (Acts xv. 18.) He sees all things from the beginning of time to the end of it, and beyond to all eternity, and from all eternity he did foresee them. But this foreknowledge here, relates peculiarly to the elect. *Verba sensus in sacra scriptura denotant affectus*, as the Rabbins remark. So in man, Psal. lxvi. *If I see iniquity;* and in God, Psal. i. 6. *For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous*, &c. And again, Amos iii. 2. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth*, &c. And in that speech of our Saviour, relating it as the terrible doom of reprobates at the last day, *Depart*, &c., *I know you not, I never knew you*. So St. Paul, Rom. vii. 15. *For that which I do, I allow* [Gr. *know*] *not*. And

Beza observes that γινώσκειν is by the Greeks sometimes taken for *decernere, judicare;* thus some speak, to *cognosce* upon a business. So then this foreknowledge is no other than that eternal love of God, or decree of election, by which some are appointed unto life, and being foreknown or elected unto that end, they are predestinate to the way to it. *For, whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.* (Rom. viii. 29.)

It is most vain to imagine a foresight of faith in men, and that God in the view of that faith, as the condition of election itself, as it is called, has chosen them: for, 1. Nothing at all is *futurum,* or can have that imagined futurition, but as it is, and because it is decreed by God to be; and therefore, (as says the Apostle St. James, in the passage before cited,) *Known unto God are all his works,* because they are his works in time, and his purpose from eternity. 2. It is most absurd to give any reason of Divine will without Himself. 3. This supposition easily solves all that difficulty which the Apostle speaks of; and yet he never thought of such a solution, but runs high for an answer, not to satisfy cavilling reason, but to silence it, and stop its mouth: for thus the Apostle argues, Rom. ix. 19, 20. *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* Who can conceive whence this should be, that any man should believe, unless it be given him of God? And if given him, then it was His purpose to give it him; and if so, then it is evident that He had a purpose to save him; and for that end He gives faith; not therefore purposes to save, because man shall believe. 4. This seems cross to these Scriptures, where they speak of the subordination, or rather co-ordination of those two: as here, *foreknown* and *elect,* not because of obedience, or sprinkling, or any such thing, but to obedience and sprinkling which is by faith. So God predestinated, not because he foresaw men would be conformed to Christ, but that they might be so.

Rom. viii. 29. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.* And the same order is observable, Acts ii. 47. *And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.* Also xiii. 48. *And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.*

This foreknowledge, then, is His eternal and unchangeable love; and that thus he chooseth some, and rejecteth others, is for that great end, to manifest and magnify his mercy and justice: but why he appointed this man for the one, and that man for the other, made Peter a vessel of this mercy, and Judas of wrath, this is even so, because it seemed good to Him. This, if it be harsh, yet is Apostolic doctrine. *Hath not the potter* (saith St. Paul) *power over the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?* This deep we must admire, and always in considering it, close with this: *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.*

III. The connexion of these we are now for our profit to take notice of; that *effectual calling* is inseparably tied to this eternal *foreknowledge* or *election* on the one side, and to *salvation* on the other. These two links of the chain are up in heaven in God's own hand; but this middle one is let down to earth, into the hearts of his children, and they laying hold on it, have sure hold on the other two, for no power can sever them. If, therefore, they can read the characters of God's image in their own souls, those are the counter-part of the golden characters of His love, in which their names are written in the book of life. Their believing writes their names under the promises of the revealed book of life—the Scriptures, and so ascertains them, that the same names are in the secret book of life which God hath by himself from eternity. So that finding the stream of grace in their hearts, though they see not the fountain whence it flows, nor the ocean into which it returns, yet they know that it hath its source, and shall return to that ocean which ariseth from their eternal election, and shall empty itself into that eternity of happiness and salvation.

Hence much joy ariseth to the believer; this tie is indissoluble, as the agents are the Father, the Son, and the Spirit: so are *election*, and *vocation*, and *sanctification*, and *justification*, and *glory*. Therefore, in all conditions, believers may, from a sense of the working of the Spirit in them, look back to that election, and forward to that salvation; but they that remain unholy and disobedient have as yet no evidence of this love; and therefore cannot, without vain presumption and self-delusion, judge thus of themselves, that they are within the peculiar love of God. But in this, *Let the righteous be glad, and let them shout for joy, all that are upright in heart.*

It is one main point of happiness, that he that is happy doth know and judge himself to be so: this being the peculiar good of a reasonable creature, it is to be enjoyed in a reasonable way; it is not as the dull resting of a stone, or any other natural body in its natural place; but the knowledge and consideration of it is the fruition of it, the very relishing and tasting its sweetness.

The perfect blessedness of the saints is awaiting them above; but even their present condition is truly happy, though incompletely, and but a small beginning of that which they expect. And this their present happiness is so much the greater, the more clear knowledge and firm persuasion they have of it. It is one of the pleasant fruits of the godly, *to know the things that are freely given them of God.* (1 Cor. ii. 12.) Therefore the Apostle, to comfort his dispersed brethren, sets before them a description of that excellent spiritual condition to which they are called.

If *election*, *effectual calling*, and *salvation*, be inseparably linked together, then by any one of them a man may lay hold upon all the rest, and may know that his hold is sure; and this is that way wherein we may attain, and ought to seek, that comfortable assurance of the love of God. Therefore *make your calling sure*, and, by that, your *election;* for that being done, this follows of itself. We are not to pry immediately into the decree, but to read it in the performance. Though the mariner

sees not the pole-star, yet the needle of the compass which points to it, tells him which way he sails: thus the heart that is touched with the loadstone of Divine love, trembling with godly fear, and yet still looking towards God by fixed believing, points at the love of election, and tells the soul that its course is heavenward, towards the haven of eternal rest. He that loves, may be sure he was loved first; and he that chooses God for his delight and portion, may conclude confidently, that God hath chosen him to be one of those that shall enjoy him, and be happy in him for ever; for that our love, and electing of him is but the return and repercussion of the beams of his love shining upon us.

Find thou but within thee sanctification by the Spirit, and this argues necessarily, both justification by the Son, and the election of God the Father. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.* (1 John iv. 13.) It is a most strange demonstration, *ab effectu reciproco:* he called those he hath elected; he *elected* those he called. Where this sanctifying Spirit is not, there can be no persuasion of this eternal love of God: they that are *children of disobedience* can conclude no otherwise of themselves but that they are the *children of wrath.* Although, from present unsanctification, a man cannot infer that he is not elected; for the decree may, for a part of a man's life, run (as it were) under ground; yet this is sure, that the estate leads to death, and unless it be broken, will prove the black line of reprobation. A man hath no portion amongst the children of God, nor can read one word of comfort in all the promises that belong to them, while he remains unholy. Men may please themselves in profane scoffing at the holy Spirit of grace, but let them withal know this, that that holy Spirit whom they mock and despise, is that Spirit *who seals men to the day of redemption.* (Ephes. iv. 30.)

If any pretend that they have the Spirit, and so turn away from the straight rule of the holy Scriptures, they have a spirit indeed, but it is a fanatical spirit, the spirit of delusion and gid-

diness; but the Spirit of God, that leads his children in the way of truth, and is for that purpose sent them from heaven to guide them thither, squares their thoughts and ways to that rule whereof it is author, and that word which was inspired by it, and sanctifies them to obedience. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* (1 John ii. 4.)

Now this Spirit which sanctifieth, and sanctifieth to obedience, is within us the evidence of our election, and the earnest of our salvation. And whoso are not sanctified and led by this Spirit, the Apostle tells us what is their condition, Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

Let us not delude ourselves: this is a truth, if there be any in religion; they who are not made Saints in the state of grace, shall never be Saints in glory.

The stones which are appointed for that glorious temple above, are hewn, and polished, and prepared for it here; as the stones were wrought and prepared in the mountains, for building the temple at Jerusalem.

This is God's order: Psal. lxxxiv. 12. He gives *grace* and *glory*. Moralists can tell us, that the way to the temple of honour, is through the temple of virtue. They that think they are bound for heaven in the ways of sin, have either found a new way untrodden by all that are gone thither, or will find themselves deceived in the end. We need not then that poor shift for the pressing of holiness and obedience upon men, to represent it to them as the meriting cause of salvation. This is not at all to the purpose, seeing that without it the necessity of holiness to salvation is pressing enough; for holiness is no less necessary to salvation, than if it were the meriting cause of it; it is as inseparably tied to it in the purpose of God. And in the order of performance, godliness is as certainly before salvation, as if salvation did wholly and altogether depend upon it, and were in point of justice deserved by it. Seeing, then, there is no other way to happiness but by holiness, no assurance

of the love of God without it, take the Apostle's advice: study it, seek it, follow earnestly after holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord.*

Grace unto you and peace be multiplied.] It hath always been a civil custom amongst men to season their intercourse with good wishes one for another; this the Apostles use in their epistles, in a spiritual, divine way, suitable to their holy writings. It well becomes the messengers of *grace* and *peace* to wish both, and to make their salutation conform to the main scope and subject of their discourse. The Hebrew word of salutation we have here—*Peace*, and that which is the spring both of this and all good things, in the other word of salutation used by the Greeks—*Grace*. All right rejoicing, and prosperity, and happiness, flow from this source, and from this alone, and are sought elsewhere in vain.

In general, this is the character of a Christian spirit, to have a heart filled with *blessing*, with this sweet good-will and good-wishing to all, especially to those who are their brethren in the same profession of religion. And this charity is a precious balm, diffusing itself in the wise and seasonable expressions of it, upon fit occasions; and those expressions must be cordial and sincere, not like what you call court holy-water, in which there is nothing else but falsehood, or vanity at the best. This manifests men to be the sons of blessing, and of the ever-blessed God, the father of all blessing, when in his name they bless one another: yea, our Saviour's rule goes higher, to *bless those that curse them*, and urges it by that relation to God as their Father, that in this they may resemble him: *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.*

But, in a more eminent way, it is the duty of pastors to bless their people, not only by their public and solemn benediction, but by daily and instant prayers for them in secret. And the great *Father, who seeth in secret, will reward them openly.*

They are to be ever both endeavouring and wishing their

increase of knowledge and all spiritual grace, in which they have St. Paul a frequent pattern.

They who are messengers of this *grace*, if they have experience of it, it is the oil of gladness that will dilate their heart, and make it large in love and spiritual desires for others, especially their own flocks.

Let us consider, 1. The matter of the Apostle's desire for them,—*grace and peace*. 2. The measure of it, that it may *be multiplied*.

1*st*. The matter of the Apostle's desire—*Grace*. We need not make a noise with the many school-distinctions of *Grace*, and describe in what sense it is here to be taken; for no doubt it is all *saving Grace* to those dispersed brethren, so that in the largest notion which it can have that way, we may safely here take it.

What are *preventing grace*, *assisting grace*, *working* and *co-working grace*, (as we may admit these differences in a sound sense,) but divers names of the same effectual saving grace, in relation to our different estate? as the same sea receives different names from the different parts of the shore it beats upon. First, it prevents and works; then it assists and prosecutes what it hath wrought: *He worketh in us to will and to do*. But the whole sense of saving grace, I conceive, is comprehended in these two. 1. Grace in the fountain, that is, the peculiar love and favour of God. 2. Grace in the streams, the fruits of this love, (for it is not an empty, but a most rich and liberal love,) *viz*., all the graces and spiritual blessings of God bestowed upon them whom he hath freely chosen. The love of God in itself can neither diminish nor increase, but it is multiplied, or abounds in the manifestation and effects of it. So then, to desire grace to be multiplied to them, is to wish to them the living spring of it, that love which cannot be exhausted, but is ever flowing forth, and instead of abating, makes each day richer than the preceding.

And this is that which should be the top and sum of Christian desires,—to have, or want any other thing indif-

ferently, but to be resolved and resolute in this, to seek a share in this grace, the free love of God, and the sure evidences of it within you, the fruit of holiness, and the graces of his Spirit. But the most of us are otherwise taken up; we will not be convinced how basely and foolishly we are busied, though in the best and most respected employments of the world, so long as we neglect our noblest trade of growing rich in grace, and the comfortable enjoyment of the love of God. Our Saviour tells us of *one thing needful*, importing that all other things are comparatively unnecessary, by-works, and mere impertinencies; and yet, in these we lavish out our short and uncertain time; we let the other stand by till we find leisure. Men who are altogether profane, think not on it at all. Some others possibly deceive themselves thus, and say, When I have done with such a business in which I am engaged, then I will sit down seriously to this, and bestow more time and pains on these things, which are undeniably greater and better, and more worthy of it. But this is a slight that is in danger to undo us. What if we attain not to the end of that business, but end ourselves before it? Or if we do not, yet some other business may step in after that. Oh then, say we, that must be dispatched also. Thus, by such delays, we may lose the present opportunity, and, in the end, our own souls.

Oh! be persuaded it deserves your diligence, and that without delay, to seek somewhat that may be constant enough to abide with you, and strong enough to uphold you in all conditions, and that is alone this free grace and love of God. While many say, *Who will shew us any good?* set you in with David in his choice, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, and this shall rejoice my heart more than the abundance of corn and wine.* (Psalm iv. 6, 7.)

This is that light which can break into the darkest dungeons, from which all other lights and comforts are shut out; and without this, all other enjoyments are, what the world would be without the sun, nothing but darkness. Happy they who have this light of Divine favour and grace shining into their

souls, for by it they shall be led to that city, where the sun and moon are needless; for *The glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* (Rev. xxi. 23.)

Godliness is profitable for all things, saith the Apostle, *having the promises of this life and that which is to come;* all other blessings are the attendants of grace, and follow upon it. This blessing, which the Apostle here (as St. Paul also in his Epistles) joins with Grace, was, with the Jews, of so large a sense, as to comprehend all that they could desire; when they wished Peace, they meant all kind of good, all welfare and prosperity. And thus we may take it here, for all kind of peace; yea, and for all other blessings, but especially that spiritual peace, which is the proper fruit of grace, and doth so intrinsically flow from it.

We may and ought to wish to the Church of God outward blessings, and particularly outward peace, as one of the greatest, and one of the most valuable favours of God: thus prayed the Psalmist, *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.*

That Wisdom which doth what he will, by what means he will, and works one contrariety out of another, brings light out of darkness, good out of evil,—can and doth turn tears and troubles to the advantage of his Church; but certainly, in itself, peace is more suitable to its increase, and, if not abused, it proves so too. Thus in the Apostolic times, it is said, Acts ix. 31, *The Church had peace and increased exceedingly.*

We ought also to wish for ecclesiastical peace to the Church, that she may be free from dissensions and divisions. These readily arise, more or less, as we see, in all times, and haunt religion, and the reformation of it, as a *malus genius.* St. Paul had this to say to his Corinthians, 1 Ep. i. 5, though he had given them this testimony, that they were enriched in all utterance and knowledge, and were wanting in no gift, yet, presently after, ver. 13, *I hear that there are divisions and contentions among you. The enemy had done this*, as our Saviour speaks; and this Enemy is no fool, for, by Divine per-

mission, he works to his own end very wisely. There is not one thing that doth on all hands choke the seed of religion so much, as thorny debates and differences about itself. So, in succeeding ages, and at the breaking forth of the light in Germany, in Luther's time, multitudes of sects arose.

Profane men do not only stumble, but fall and break their necks upon these divisions. We see, (think they, and some of them possibly say it out,) that they who mind religion most cannot agree upon it: our easiest way is, not to embroil ourselves, not at all to be troubled with the business. Many are of Gallio's temper; they *will care for none of those things.* Thus these offences prove a mischief to the profane world, as our Saviour says, *Woe to the world because of offences.*

Then those on the erring side, who are taken with new opinions and fancies, are altogether taken up with them, their main thoughts are spent upon them; and thus the sap is drawn from that which should nourish and prosper in their hearts, *sanctified useful knowledge* and *saving grace.* The other are as weeds, which divert the nourishment in gardens from the plants and flowers: and certainly these weeds, *viz.*, men's own conceits, cannot but grow more with them, when they give way to them, than solid religion doth; for their hearts (as one said of the earth) are mother to those, and but step-mother to this.

It is also a loss even to those that oppose errors and divisions, that they are forced to be busied in that way: for the wisest and godliest of them find (and such are sensible of it) that disputes in religion are no friends to that which is far sweeter in it, but hinders and abates it, *viz.*, those pious and devout thoughts, that are both the more useful and truly delightful.

As peace is a choice blessing, so this is the choicest peace, and is the peculiar inseparable effect of this grace with which it is here jointly wished,—*Grace* and *Peace;* the flower of peace growing upon the root of grace. This spiritual peace hath two things in it. 1. Reconciliation with God. 2. Tran-

quillity of spirit. The quarrel and matter of enmity, you know, betwixt God and man, is, the rebellion, the sin of man; and he being naturally altogether sinful, there can proceed nothing from him, but what foments and increases the hostility. It is grace alone, the most free grace of God, that contrives, and offers, and makes the peace, else it had never been; we had universally perished without it. Now, in this consists the wonder of Divine grace, that the Almighty God seeks agreement, and entreats for it, with sinful clay, which he could wholly destroy in a moment.

Jesus Christ, the Mediator and purchaser of this peace, bought it with his blood, killed the enmity by his own death, Eph. ii. 15. And therefore the tenor of it in the Gospel runs still in his name: (Rom. v. 1.) *We have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord;* and St. Paul expresses it in his salutations, which are the same with this, *Grace and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

As the free love and grace of God appointed this means and way of our peace, and offered it,—so the same grace applies it, and makes it ours, and gives us faith to apprehend it.

And from our sense of this peace, or reconcilement with God, arises that which is our inward peace, a calm and quiet temper of mind. This peace, which we have with God in Christ, is inviolable; but because the sense and persuasion of it may be interrupted, the soul that is truly at peace with God may for a time be disquieted in itself, through weakness of faith, or the strength of temptation, or the darkness of desertion, losing sight of that grace, that love and light of God's countenance, on which its tranquillity and joy depends. *Thou didst hide thy face,* saith David, *and I was troubled.* But when these eclipses are over, the soul is revived with new consolation, as the face of the earth is renewed and made to smile with the return of the sun in the spring; and this ought always to uphold Christians in the saddest times, *viz.*, that the grace and love of God towards them depend not on their sense, nor

upon any thing in them, but is still in itself incapable of the smallest alteration.

It is natural to men to desire their own peace, the quietness and contentment of their minds: but most men miss the way to it; and therefore find it not; for there is no way to it, indeed, but this one, wherein few seek it, *viz.*, reconcilement and peace with God. The persuasion of that alone makes the mind clear and serene, like your fairest summer days. *My peace I give you,* saith Christ, *not as the world. Let not your hearts be troubled.* All the peace and favour of the world cannot calm a troubled heart; but where this peace is which Christ gives, all the trouble and disquiet of the world cannot disturb it. *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.* (See also for this, Psalms xlvi. cxxiii.) All outward distress, to a mind thus at peace, is but as the rattling of the hail upon the tiles to him that sits within the house at a sumptuous feast. A good conscience is styled a feast, and with an advantage which no other feast can have, nor, were it possible, could men endure it. A few hours of feasting will weary the most professed epicure; but a conscience thus at peace is a *continual feast*, with continual unwearied delight What makes the world take up such a prejudice against religion as a sour unpleasant thing? They see the afflictions and griefs of Christians, but they do not see their joys, the inward pleasure of mind that they can possess in a very hard estate. Have you not tried other ways enough? Hath not he tried them who had more ability and skill for it than you, and found them not only *vanity*, but *vexation of spirit?* If you have any belief of holy truth, put but this once upon the trial, seek peace in the way of grace. This inward peace is too precious a liquor to be poured into a filthy vessel. A holy heart, that gladly entertains grace, shall find that it and peace cannot dwell asunder.

An ungodly man may sleep to death in the lethargy of carnal

presumption and impenitency; but a true, lively, solid peace he cannot have: *There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God.* (Isa. lvii. 21.) And if He say there is none, speak peace who will, if all the world with one voice should speak it, it shall prove none.

2dly. Consider the *measure* of the Apostle's desire for his scattered brethren, that this *Grace* and *Peace* may be *multiplied.* This the Apostle wishes for them, knowing the imperfection of the graces and peace of the saints while they are here below; and this they themselves, under a sense of that imperfection, ardently desire. They that have tasted the sweetness of this grace and peace, call incessantly for more. This is a disease in earthly desires, and a disease incurable by all the things desired; there is no satisfaction attainable by them; but this avarice of spiritual things is a virtue, and by our Saviour is called *blessedness*, because it tends to fulness and satisfaction: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

Ver. 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Ver. 4. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

It is a cold, lifeless thing to speak of spiritual things upon mere report: but they that speak of them as their own, as having share and interest in them, and some experience of their sweetness, their discourse of them is enlivened with firm belief, and ardent affection; they cannot mention them, but their hearts are straight taken with such gladness, as they are forced to vent in praises. Thus our Apostle here, and St. Paul, and often elsewhere, when they considered these things wherewith they were about to comfort the godly to whom they wrote, they were suddenly elevated with the joy of them, and broke forth into thanksgiving; so teaching us, by their example, what real joy there is in the consolations of the Gospel, and what praise is

due from all the saints to the God of those consolations. This is such an inheritance that the very thoughts and hopes of it are able to sweeten the greatest griefs and afflictions. What then shall the possession of it be, wherein there shall be no rupture, nor the least drop of any grief at all? The main subject of these verses is, that which is the main comfort that supports the spirits of the Godly in all conditions.

1*st*, Their *after inheritance*, as in the 4th verse. 2dly, Their *present title* to it, and *assured hope* of it, ver. 3. 3rdly, The *immediate cause* of both assigned, viz., *Jesus Christ.* 4thly, All this derived from the *free mercy of God*, as the first and highest cause, and returned to his praise and glory as the last and highest end of it.

For the *first:* The *inheritance.* [But because the fourth verse, which describes it, is linked with the subsequent, we will not go so far off to return back again, but first speak to this third verse, and in it,]

Consider 1. Their *Title* to this *inheritance,—Begotten again.* 2. Their *Assurance* of it, viz., *a holy or lively hope.*

The *title* which the Saints have to their rich inheritance, is of the validest and most unquestionable kind, *viz.*, by birth. Not by their first natural birth; but that we are all born indeed, but we find what it is, (Ephes. ii. 3.) *Children of wrath*, heirs apparent of eternal flames. It is an everlasting inheritance too, but so much the more fearful, being of everlasting misery, or (so to speak) of immortal death; and we are made sure to it, they who remain in that condition cannot lose their right, although they gladly would escape it; they shall be forced to enter possession. But it is by a new and supernatural birth that men are both freed from their engagement to that woeful inheritance, and invested into the rights of this other, here mentioned, which is as full of happiness as the former is miserable: therefore are they said here to be begotten again to that lively hope. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath begotten us again. And thus the regenerate are the children of an immortal Father, and, as such, entitled to an inheritance of

immortality: *If children, then heirs, heirs of God;* and this sonship is by adoption in Christ; therefore it is added, *Joint heirs with Christ.* Rom. viii. 17. We adopted children, and He the only begotten Son of God by an eternal, ineffable generation.

And yet, this our adoption is not a mere extrinsical denomination, as is adoption amongst men; but is accompanied with a real change in those that are adopted, a new nature and spirit being infused into them, by reason of which, as they are adopted to this their inheritance in Christ, they are likewise begotten of God, and born again to it, by the supernatural work of regeneration. They are like their heavenly Father; they have his image renewed on their souls, and their Father's Spirit; they have it, and are acted and led by it. This is that great mystery of the kingdom of God which puzzled Nicodemus; it was darkness to him at first, till he was instructed in that night, under the covert whereof he came to Christ.

Nature cannot conceive of any generation or birth, but that which is within its own compass: only they who are partakers of this spiritual birth understand what it means; to others it is a riddle, an unsavoury, unpleasant subject.

It is sometimes ascribed to the subordinate means;—To Baptism, called therefore the *laver of regeneration,* Tit. iii. 5;—To the word of God, James i. 18; it is that immortal seed, whereby we are born again;—To the ministers of this word, and the seals of it, as 1 Cor. iv. 15, *For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many Fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel.* As also, Gal. iv. 19. But all these means have their vigour and efficacy in this great work, from the Father of Spirits, who is their Father in their first creation, and infusion, and in this their regeneration, which is a new and second creation: *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,* 2 Cor. v. 17.

Divines have reason to infer from the nature of conversion thus expressed, that man doth not bring any thing to this work himself. It is true he hath a will, as his natural faculty; but

that this will embraces the offer of grace, and turns to him that offers it, is from renewing grace, which sweetly and yet strongly, strongly and yet sweetly, inclines it.

1. Nature cannot raise itself to this, any more than a man can give natural being to himself. 2. It is not a superficial change; it is a new life and being. A moral man, in his changes and reformations of himself, is still the same man. Though he reform so far, as that men, in their ordinary phrase, shall call him quite another man, yet, in truth, till he be born again, there is no new nature in him. *The sluggard turns on his bed as the door on the hinges*, says Solomon. Thus, the natural man turns from one custom and posture to another, but never turns off. But the Christian, by virtue of this new birth, can say indeed, *Ego non sum ego*, I am not the same man I was.

You that are nobles, aspire to this honourable condition; add this nobleness to the other, for it far surpasses it; make it the crown of all your honours and advantages. And you that are of mean birth, or if you have any stain on your birth, the only way to make up and repair all, and truly to ennoble you, is this—to be the sons of a King, yea of the King of Kings, and *this honour have all his Saints. To as many as received him, he gave this privilege to be the Sons of God*, John i. 12.

Unto a lively hope.] *Now are we the Sons of God*, (saith the Apostle, 1 John iii. 2,) *but it doth not yet appear what we shall be.* These Sons are heirs, but all this lifetime is their minority; yet, even now, being partakers of this new birth and Sonship, they have a right to it, and in the assurance of that right, this *living hope:* as an heir, when he is capable of those thoughts, hath not only right of inheritance, but may rejoice in the hope he hath of it, and please himself in thinking of it. But hope is said to be only in respect of an uncertain good: true, in the world's phrase it is so; for *their* hope is conversant in uncertain things, or in things that may be certain, after an uncertain manner; all their worldly hopes are tottering, built upon sand, and their hopes of Heaven are but blind and groundless conjectures; but the hope of the sons of the Living

God is a living hope. That which Alexander said when he dealt liberally about him, that he *left hope to himself*, the children of God may more wisely and happily say, when they leave the hot pursuit of the world to others, and despise it; their portion is hope. The thread of Alexander's life was cut off in the midst of his victories, and so all his hopes vanished; but their hope cannot die or disappoint them.

But then it is said to be *lively*, not only *objectively*, but *effectively;* enlivening and comforting the children of God in all distresses, enabling them to encounter and surmount all difficulties in the way. And then it is *formally* so; it cannot fail, dies not before accomplishment. Worldly hopes often mock men, and so cause them to be ashamed, and men take it as a great blot, and are most of all ashamed of those things that discover weakness of judgment in them. Now worldly hopes do thus, they put the fool upon a man: when he hath judged himself sure, and laid so much weight and expectation on them, then they break and foil him: they are not living, but lying hopes, and dying hopes; they die often before us, and we live to bury them, and see our own folly and infelicity in trusting to them; but at the utmost, they die with us when we die, and can accompany us no further. But this hope answers expectation to the full, and much beyond it, and deceives no way but in that happy way of far exceeding it.

A *living hope*, living in death itself! The world dares say no more for its device, than *Dum spiro spero;* but the children of God can add, by virtue of this living hope, *Dum exspiro spero.* It is a fearful thing when a man and all his hopes die together. Thus saith Solomon of the wicked, Prov. xi. 7. When he dieth, then die his hopes; (many of them *before*, but at the utmost *then*, all of them;) but the *righteous hath hope in his death.* Prov. xiv. 32. Death, which cuts the sinews of all other hopes, and turns men out of all other inheritances, alone fulfils this hope, and ends it in fruition; as a messenger sent to bring the children of God home to the possession of their inheritance.

By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.] This refers both to *begotten again* by his resurrection, and having this *living hope* by his resurrection; and well suits both, it being the proper cause of both, in this order. First, then, of the *birth:* next, of the hope.

The image of God is renewed in us by our union with Him who is *the express image of his Father's person,* Heb. i. 3. Therefore this new birth in the conception, is expressed by the *forming of Christ in the soul,* Gal. iv. 19; and his resurrection particularly is assigned as the cause of our new life. This new birth is called our *resurrection,* and that in conformity to Christ, yea, by the virtue and influence of his. His resurrection is called a *birth,* he the *first begotten from the dead,* Rev. i. 5; and that prophecy, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,* Psal. ii. 7, is applied to his resurrection as fulfilled in it, Acts xiii. 33, *God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* Not only is it the exemplar, but the efficient cause of our new birth. Thus, in the 6th chapter of Romans, at large, and often elsewhere.

And thus likewise it is the cause of our *living hope,*—that which indeed inspires and maintains life in it. Because he hath conquered death, and is risen again, and that is implied which followeth, he is *set down at the right hand of God,* hath entered into possession of that inheritance;—this gives us a living hope, that, according to his own request, *where he is there we may be also.* Thus this hope is strongly underset, on the one side, by the resurrection of Christ; on the other, by the abundant mercy of God the Father. Our hope depends not on our own strength or wisdom, nor on any thing in us; (for if it did, it would be short-lived, would die, and die quickly;) but on his resurrection who can die no more: for *in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.* Rom. vi. 10. This makes this hope not to imply, in the notion of it, uncertainty, as worldly hopes do;

but it is a firm, stable, inviolable hope, *an anchor fixed within the vail.*

According to his abundant mercy.] Mercy is the spring of all this; yea, great mercy, and manifold mercy: "for (as "St. Bernard saith) great sins and great miseries need great "mercy, and many sins and miseries need many mercies." And is not this great mercy, to make of Satan's slaves Sons of the most High? Well may the Apostle say, *Behold what manner of love and how great love the Father hath showed us, that we should be called the Sons of God!*—The world knows us not, because it knew not Him. They that have not seen the father of a child, cannot know that it resembles him: thus, the world knows not God, and therefore discerns not his image in his children so as to esteem them for it. But whatever be their opinion, this we must say ourselves, Behold what manner of love is this; to take firebrands of hell, and to appoint them to be one day brighter than the sun in the firmament; to *raise the poor out of the dunghill, and set them with princes.* (Psalm cxiii. 7, 8.)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.] Here, lastly, we see it stirs up the Apostle to praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the style of the Gospel,—as formerly, under the Law, it was *The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and *The God that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*, &c. This now is the order of the government of grace, that it holds first with Christ our Head, and in him with us. So he says, *I go to my Father, and your Father, and my God, and your God;* which, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catechism, observes, shows us not only our communion with him,—that might have been expressed thus, *I go to my God and Father*,—but the order of the covenant, first my Father and my God, and then yours. Thus ought we, in our consideration of the mercies of God, still to take in Christ, for in him they are conveyed to us: thus, (Eph. i. 3,) *With all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.*

Blessed.] He blesseth us really: *benefaciendo benedicit.*

We bless him by acknowledging his goodness. And this we ought to do at all times, (Psal. xxxiv. 1,) *I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.* All this is far below him and his mercies. What are our lame praises in comparison of His love? Nothing, and less than nothing; but love will stammer, rather than be dumb. They who are amongst his children, *begotten again*, have, in the resurrection of Christ, a lively hope of glory: as it is, (Col. i. 27,) *Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* This leads them to observe and admire that rich mercy whence it flows; and this consideration awakes them, and constrains them to break forth into praises.

To an inheritance incorruptible.] *As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart.*—(Prov. xxv. 20.) Worldly mirth is so far from curing spiritual grief, that even worldly grief, where it is great and takes deep root, is not allayed but increased by it. A man who is full of inward heaviness, the more he is encompassed about with mirth, it exasperates and enrages his grief the more; like ineffectual weak physic, which removes not the humour, but stirs it and makes it more unquiet; but spiritual joy is seasonable for all estates: in prosperity, it is pertinent to crown and sanctify all other enjoyments, with this which so far surpasses them; and in distress, it is the only *Nepenthe*, the cordial of fainting spirits: so, (Psal. iv. 7,) *He hath put joy into my heart.* This mirth makes way for itself, which other mirth cannot do. These songs are sweetest in the night of distress. Therefore the Apostle, writing to his scattered, afflicted brethren, begins his Epistle with this song of praise, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The matter of this joy is, the joyful remembrance of the happiness laid up for them, under the name of *inheritance*. Now this inheritance is described by the singular qualities of it, *viz.*, 1. The excellency of its nature; 2. The certainty of its attainment. The former is conveyed in these three, *Incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;* the latter, in

the last words of this verse, and in the verse following: *Reserved in heaven for you*, &c.

God is bountiful to all, gives to all men all that they have, health, riches, honour, strength, beauty, and wit; but these things he scatters (as it were) with an indifferent hand. Upon others he looks, as well as upon his beloved children; but the *inheritance* is peculiarly *theirs*. Inheritance is convertible with Sonship; Abraham gave gifts to Keturah's sons, and dismissed them (Gen. xxv. 5); but the inheritance was for the Son of the promise. When we see a man rising in preferment or estate, or admired for excellent gifts or endowments of mind, we think there is a happy man: but we consider not that none of all those things are matter of inheritance; within awhile he is to be turned out of all, and if he have not somewhat beyond all those to look to, he is but a miserable man, and so much the more miserable, that once he seemed and was reputed happy. There is a certain time wherein heirs come to possess: thus it is with this inheritance too. There is mention made by the Apostle of *a perfect man,—unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* (Eph. iv. 13.) And though the inheritance is rich and honourable, yet the heir, being young, is held under discipline, and is more strictly dealt with, possibly, than the servants,—sharply corrected for that which is let pass in them; but still, even then, in regard of that which he is born to, his condition is much better than theirs, and all the correction he suffers, prejudices him not, but fits him for inheriting. The love of our heavenly Father is beyond the love of mothers in tenderness, and yet beyond the love of fathers (who are usually said to love more wisely) in point of wisdom. He will not undo his children, his heirs, with too much indulgence. It is one of his heavy judgments upon the foolish children of disobedience, that *Ease shall slay them, and their prosperity shall prove their destruction.*

While the children of God are childish and weak in faith, they are like some great heirs before they come to years of un-

derstanding; they consider not their inheritance, and what they are to come to, have not their spirits elevated to thoughts worthy of their estate, and their behaviour conformed to it; but as they grow up in years, they come, by little and little, to be sensible of those things, and the nearer they come to possession, the more apprehensive they are of their quality, and of what doth answerably become them to do. And this is the duty of such as are indeed heirs of glory;—to grow in the understanding and consideration of that which is prepared for them, and to suit themselves, as they are able, to those great hopes. This is what the Apostle St. Paul prays for, on behalf of his Ephesians, (ch. i. ver. 18,) *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints.* This would make them holy and heavenly, to *have their conversation in Heaven, from whence they look for a Saviour.* That we may, then, the better know somewhat of the dignity and riches of this inheritance, let us consider the description which is here given us of it. And, first, It is

Incorruptible.] Although this seems to be much the same with the *third* quality, *That fadeth not away,* (which is a borrowed expression for the illustrating of its incorruptibleness,) yet I conceive that there is some difference, and that in these three qualities there is a gradation. Thus it is called *incorruptible;* that is, it perisheth not, cannot come to nothing, is an estate that cannot be spent: but though it were abiding, yet it might be such as that the continuance of it were not very desirable: it would be but a misery, at best, to continue always in this life. *Plotinus* thanked God that his soul was not tied to an immortal body. Then, *undefiled;* it is not stained with the least spot: *this* signifies the purity and perfection of it, as *that* the perpetuity of it. It doth not only abide, and is pure, but both together, it abideth always in its integrity. And lastly, *it fadeth not away;* it doth not fade nor wither

at all, is not sometimes more, sometimes less pleasant, but ever the same, still like itself; and this constitutes the immutability of it.

As it is *incorruptible*, it carries away the palm from all earthly possessions and inheritances; for all those epithets are intended to signify its opposition to the things of this world, and to show how far it excels them all; and in this comparative light we are to consider it. For as divines say of the knowledge of God which we have here, that the negative notion makes up a great part of it—we know rather what He is not, than what He is, infinite, incomprehensible, immutable, *&c.*, so it is of this happiness, this inheritance; and indeed it is no other than God. We cannot tell you what it is, but we can say so far what it is not, as declares it is unspeakably above all the most excellent things of the inferior world and this present life. It is by privatives, by removing imperfections from it, that we describe it, and we can go no farther than this,—*Incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

All things that we see, being compounded, may be dissolved again. The very visible heavens, which are the purest piece of the material world, (notwithstanding the pains the philosopher takes to exempt them,) the Scriptures teach us that they are *corruptible*, Psalm cii. 26: *They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.* And from thence the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, ch. i. ver. 10, and our Apostle in his other Epistle, chap. iii. ver. 11, use the same expression. But it is needless to fetch too great a compass, to evince the corruptibleness of all inheritances. Besides what they are in themselves, it is a shorter way to prove them corruptible in relation to us and our possessing them, by our own corruptibleness and corruption, or perishing out of this life in which we enjoy them. We are here *inter peritura perituri;* the things are passing which we enjoy, and we are passing who enjoy them. An earthly inheritance is so called in regard of succession; but to every one it

is at the most but for term of life. As one of the kings of Spain replied to one of his courtiers, who, thinking to please his master, wished that kings were immortal; *If that had been*, said he, *I should never have been king.* When death comes, that removes a man out of all his possessions to give place to another: therefore are these inheritances decaying and dying in relation to us, because we decay and die; and when a man dies, his inheritances and honours, and all things here, are at an end, in respect of him: yea, we may say the world ends to him.

Thus Solomon reasons, that a man's happiness cannot be upon this earth; because it must be some durable, abiding thing that must make him happy, abiding, to wit, in his enjoyment. Now, though the earth abide, yet, because man abides not on the earth to possess it, but one age drives out another, one generation passeth, and another cometh, *velut unda impellitur unda*, therefore, his rest and his happiness cannot be here.

Undefiled.] All possessions here, are defiled and stained with many other defects and failings; still somewhat wanting, some damp on them or crack in them; fair houses, but sad cares flying about the gilded and ceiled roofs; stately and soft beds, and a full table, but a sickly body and queasy stomach. As the fairest face has some mole or wart in it, so all possessions are stained with sin, either in acquiring or in using them, and therefore they are called *mammon of unrighteousness*, (Luke xvi. 9.) Iniquity is so involved in the notion of riches, that it can very hardly be separated from them. St. Jerome says, *Verum mihi videtur illud, dives aut iniquus est, aut iniqui hæres:* To me it appears, that he who is rich is either himself an unjust man, or the heir of one. Foul hands pollute all they touch; it is our sin that defiles what we possess; it is sin that burdens the whole creation, and presses groans out of the very frame of the world, (Rom. viii. 22,) *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.* This our leprosy defiles our houses, the very walls and floors, our meat and drink and all we touch,

polluted when alone, and polluted in society, our meetings and conversations together being for the greatest part nothing but a commerce and interchange of sin and vanity.

We breathe up and down in an infected air, and are very receptive of the infection by our own corruption within us. We readily turn the things we possess here to occasions and instruments of sin, and think there is no liberty nor delight in their use without abusing them. How few are they who can carry (as they say) a full cup even; who can have digestion strong enough for the right use of great places and estates; who can bear preferment without pride, and riches without covetousness, and ease without wantonness!

Then, as these earthly inheritances are stained with sin in their use, so what grief, and strife, and contentions about obtaining or retaining them! Doth not the matter of possession, this same *meum* and *teum*, divide many times the affections of those who are knit together in nature, or other strict ties, and prove the very apple of strife betwixt nearest friends?

If we trace great estates to their first original, how few will be found that owe not their beginning either to fraud, or rapine, or oppression! And the greatest empires and kingdoms in the world, have had their foundations laid in blood. Are not these defiled inheritances?

That withereth not.] A borrowed phrase, alluding to the decaying of plants and flowers, which bud and flourish at a certain time of the year, and then fade and wither, and in winter are as if they were dead.

And this is the third disadvantage of possessions and all things worldly, that they abide not in one estate, but are in a more uncertain and irregular inconstancy than either the flowers and plants of the field, or the moon, from which they are called *sublunary;* like Nebuchadnezzar's image, degenerating by degrees into baser metals, and, in the end, into a mixture of iron and clay.

The excellency, then, of this inheritance, is, that it is free

from all those evils. It falls not under the stroke of time, comes not within the compass of its scythe, which hath so large a compass, and cuts down all other things.

There is nothing in it weighing it towards corruption. It is immortal, everlasting; for it is the fruition of the immortal, everlasting God, by immortal souls, and the body joined with it shall likewise be immortal, having *put on incorruption*, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 54.

It *fadeth not away.*] No spot of sin nor sorrow there; all pollution wiped away, and all tears with it; no envy nor strife; not as here among men, one supplanting another, one pleading and fighting against another, dividing this point of earth with fire and sword;—no, this inheritance is not the less by division, by being parted amongst so many brethren, every one hath it all, each his crown, and all agreeing in casting them down before his throne, from whom they have received them, and in the harmony of his praises.

This inheritance is often called a kingdom, and a crown of glory. This last word may allude to those garlands of the ancients; and this is its property, that the flowers in it are all *Amaranthes*, (as a certain plant is named,) and so it is called (1 Pet. v. 4) *A crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

No change at all there, no winter and summer: not like the poor comforts here, but a bliss always flourishing. The grief of the saints here, is not so much for the changes of outward things, as of their inward comforts. *Suavis hora, sed brevis mora.* Sweet presences of God they sometimes have, but they are short, and often interrupted; but *there*, no cloud shall come betwixt them and their sun; they shall behold him in his full brightness for ever. As there shall be no change in their beholding, so no weariness nor abatement of their delight in beholding. They sing a new song, always the same, and yet always new. The sweetest of our music, if it were to be heard but for one whole day, would weary them who are most delighted with it. What we have here cloys, but satisfies not; the joys above never cloy, and yet always satisfy.

We should here consider the last property of this inheritance, namely, the *certainty* of it—*Reserved in Heaven for you;* but that is connected with the following verse, and so will be fitly joined with it. Now for some use of all this.

If these things were believed, they would persuade for themselves; we should not need add any entreaties to move you to seek after this inheritance. Have we not experience enough of the vanity and misery of things corruptible? and are not a great part of our days already spent amongst them? Is it not time to consider whether we be provided with any thing surer and better than what we have here; whether we have any inheritance to go home to after our wandering; or can say with the Apostle, (2 Cor. v. 1,) *We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

If these things gain our assent while we hear them, yet it dies soon. Scarcely any retire within themselves afterwards to pursue those thoughts, and to make a work indeed of them; they busy their heads rather another way, building castles in the air, and spinning out their thoughts in vain contrivances.—Happy are they whose hearts the Spirit of God sets and fixes upon this inheritance: they may join in with the Apostle, and say, as here, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto this lively hope, to this inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

Ver. 5. Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

It is doubtless a great contentment to the children of God, to hear of the excellencies of the life to come; they do not use to become weary of that subject; yet there is one doubt, which, if it be not removed, may damp their delight in hearing and considering of all the rest. The richer the estate is, it will the more kindle the malice and diligence of their enemies to deprive them of it, and to cut them short of possessing it. And this

they know, that those spiritual powers who seek to ruin them, do overmatch them far, both in craft and force.

Against the fears of this, the Apostle comforts the heirs of salvation, assuring them, that, as the estate they look for is excellent, so it is certain and safe, laid up where it is out of the reach of all adverse powers, *reserved in Heaven for you.* Besides that this is a further evidence of the worth and excellency of this inheritance, it makes it sure. It confirms what was said of its excellency; for it must be a thing of greatest worth, that is laid up in the highest and best place of the world, namely, in Heaven for you, where nothing that is impure once enters, much less is laid up and kept. Thus the land where this inheritance lies, makes good all that hath been spoken of the dignity and riches of it.

But further, as it is a rich and pleasant country where it lieth, it hath also this privilege, to be the only land of rest and peace, free from all possibility of invasion. There is no spoiling of it, and laying it waste, and defacing its beauty, by leading armies into it, and making it the seat of war; no noise of drums or trumpets, no inundations of one people driving out another and sitting down in their possessions. In a word, there is nothing there subject to decay of itself; so neither is it in danger of fraud or violence. When our Saviour speaks of this same happiness, in a like term, Matt. vi. 20, what is here called an *inheritance*, is there called a *treasure.* He expresses the permanency of it by these two, that it *hath neither moth nor rust* in itself to *corrupt* it, nor can *thieves break through and steal it.* There is a worm at the root of all our enjoyments here, corrupting causes within themselves; and besides that, they are exposed to injury from without, which may deprive us of them. How many stately palaces, which have been possibly divers years in building, hath fire, upon a very small beginning, destroyed in a few hours! What great hopes of gain by traffic hath one tempest mocked and disappointed! How many who have thought their possessions very sure, yet have lost them by some trick of law, and others (as in time of war) been

driven from them by the sword! Nothing free from all danger but this *inheritance*, which is laid up in the hands of God, and kept in Heaven for us. The highest stations in the world, namely, the estate of kings, they are but mountains of prey, one robbing and spoiling another; but in that holy mountain above, there is none to hurt, or spoil, or offer violence. What the prophet speaks of the church here, is more perfectly and eminently true of it above, Isaiah lxv. 25.

This is, indeed, a necessary condition of our joy in the thoughts of this happy estate, that we have some persuasion of our propriety, that it is *ours;* that we do not speak and hear of it, as travellers passing by a pleasant place do behold and discourse of its fair structure, the sweetness of the seat, the planting, the gardens, the meadows that are about it, and so pass on, having no further interest in it. But when we hear of this glorious inheritance, this treasure, this kingdom, that is pure, and rich, and lasting, we may add, It is mine, it is reserved in Heaven, and reserved for me; I have received the evidences, and the earnest of it; and, as it is kept safe for me, so I shall likewise be preserved to it, and that is the other part of the certainty that completes the comforts of it. (Ephes. i. 14.)

The salvation which Christ hath purchased is, indeed, laid up in Heaven, but we who seek after it are on earth, compassed about with dangers and temptations. What avails it us, that our salvation is in Heaven, in the place of safety and quietness, while we ourselves are tossed upon the stormy seas of this world, amidst rocks and shelves, every hour in danger of shipwreck? Our inheritance is in a sure hand indeed, our enemies cannot come at it; but they may over-run and destroy us at their pleasure, for we are in the midst of them. Thus might we think and complain, and lose the sweetness of all our other thoughts concerning Heaven, if there were not as firm a promise for our own safety in the midst of our dangers, as there is of the safety of our inheritance that is out of danger.

The assurance is full, thus: it is *kept* for us in Heaven, and we kept on earth for it: as it is *reserved* for us, we are no less

surely *preserved* to it. There is here, 1. The estate itself, *salvation.* 2. The preservation, or securing, of those that expect it, *kept.* 3. The time of full possession, *in the last time.*

1st, The estate—*Unto salvation.* Before it is called an *inheritance;* here we are more particularly told what is meant by that, namely, *salvation.* This is more expressly sure, being a deliverance from misery, and it imports, withal, the possession of perfect happiness. The first part of our happiness is, to be freed from those miseries to which we are subject by our guiltiness;—to be set free, 1. From the curse of the law, and the wrath of God, from everlasting death. 2. From all kind of mortality and decaying. 3. From all power and stain of sin. 4. From all temptation. 5. From all the griefs and afflictions of this life. To have the perfection of grace in the fulness of holiness, and the perfection of bliss in the fulness of joy, in the continual vision of God!—but how little we are able to say of this, our Apostle here teacheth us, in that it is vailed to us; only so much shines through as we are capable of here; but the revealed knowledge of it is only in the possession; it is *to be revealed in the last time.*

2dly, Their preservation, with the causes of it. *Kept by the power of God through faith.* The inheritance is kept not only in safety, but in quietness. The children of God, for whom it is kept, while they are here, are kept safe indeed, but not unmolested and unassaulted: they have enemies, and such as are stirring, and cunning, and powerful; but, in the midst of them, they are guarded and defended; they perish not, according to the prayer of our Saviour poured out for them, (John xvii. 16,) *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world: but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

They have the prince of the power of the air, and all his armies, all the forces he can make, against them. Though his power is nothing but tyranny and usurpation, yet because once they were under his yoke, he bestirs himself to pursue them, when they are led forth from their captivity, as Pharaoh, with

all his chariots and horses and horsemen, pursues after the Israelites going out of Egypt.

The word in the original (φρουρουμενοι) here translated *kept*, is a military term, used for those who are *kept* as in a fort or garrison-town besieged. So Satan is still raising batteries against this fort, using all ways to take it, by strength or stratagem, unwearied in his assaults, and very skilful to know his advantages, and where we are weakest, there to set on. And besides all this, he hath intelligence with a party within us, ready to betray us to him; so that it were impossible for us to hold out, were there not another watch and guard than our own, and other walls and bulwarks than any that our skill and industry can raise for our own defence. In this, then, is our safety, that there is a power above our own, yea, and above all our enemies, that guards us, *salvation* itself *our walls and bulwarks*. We ought to watch, but when we do so in obedience to our commander, the Captain of our salvation, yet it is His own watching, who *sleeps* not, nor so much as *slumbers*, it is that preserves us, and makes ours not to be in vain.—(Psal. cxxvi. 1; Isa. xxvii. 3.) And therefore those two are jointly commanded, *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. Watch*, there is the necessity of our diligence; *Pray*, there is the insufficiency of it, and the necessity of his watching, by whose power we are effectually preserved, and that power is our fort. Isa. xxvi. 1: *Salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks.* What more safe than to be walled with *Salvation* itself? So, Prov. xviii. 10, *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous fly into it and are safe.*

Now the causes of our preservation are two: 1. Supreme, *The power of God.* 2. Subordinate, *Faith.* The supreme *power of God*, is that on which depend our stability and perseverance. When we consider how weak we are in ourselves, yea, the very strongest among us, and how assaulted, we wonder, and justly we may, that any can continue one day in the state of grace: but when we look on the strength by which we are guarded, the power of God, then we see the rea-

son of our stability to the end ; for Omnipotency supports us, and the everlasting arms are under us.

Then *Faith* is the second cause of our preservation; because it applies the first cause, the *power of God.* Our faith lays hold upon this power, and this power strengthens faith, and so we are preserved; it puts us within those walls, sets the soul within the guard of the power of God, which, by self-confidence and vain presuming in its own strength, is exposed to all kind of danger. Faith is an humble, self-denying grace; it makes the Christian nothing in himself, and all in God.

The weakest persons who are within a strong place, women and children, though they were not able to resist the enemy, if they were alone, yet so long as the place wherein they are is of sufficient strength, and well manned, and every way acommodate to hold out, they are in safety: thus the weakest believer is safe, because, by believing, he is within the strongest of all defences. Faith is the victory, and Christ sets his strength against Satan's; and when the Christian is hard beset with some temptation, too strong for himself, then he looks up to Him who is the great conqueror of the powers of darkness, and calls to him, "Now, Lord, assist thy servant in this encounter, and put to thy strength, that the glory may be thine." Thus, faith is such an engine as draws in the power of God and his son Jesus, into the works and conflicts that it hath in hand. *This is our victory, even our faith.* (1 John v. 4.)

It is the property of *a good Christian* to magnify the power of God, and to have high thoughts of it; and therefore it is his privilege to find safety in that power. David cannot satisfy himself with one or two expressions of it, but delights in multiplying them: (Psalm xviii. 1,) *The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.* Faith looks above all, both that which the soul hath and that which it wants, and answers all doubts and fears with this almighty power upon which it rests.

3dly. The time of full possession—*Ready to be revealed in*

the last time. This salvation is that great work wherein God intended to manifest the glory of his grace, contrived before time, and in the several ages of the world brought forward, after the decreed manner; and the full accomplishment of it is reserved for the end of time.

The souls of the faithful do enter into the possession of it, when they remove from their houses of clay; yet is not their happiness complete till that great day of the appearing of Jesus Christ. They are naturally imperfect till their bodies be raised and rejoined to their souls, to partake together of their bliss; and they are mystically imperfect, till all the rest of the members of Jesus Christ be added to them.

But then shall their joy be absolutely full, when both their own bodies, and the mystical body of Christ shall be glorified; when all the children of that glorious family shall meet, and sit down to that great marriage supper at their Father's table. Then shall the music of that new song be full, when there is not one wanting of those that are appointed to sing it for eternity. In that day shall our Lord Jesus *be glorified in his Saints, and admired in all them that believe,* (2 Thess. i. 10.)

You see what it is that the Gospel offers you, and you may gather how great both your folly and your guiltiness will be, if you neglect and slight so great salvation when it is brought to you, and you are entreated to receive it. This is all that the preaching of the word aims at, and yet, who hearkens to it? How few lay hold on this eternal life, this inheritance, this crown that is held forth to all that hear of it!

Oh! that you could be persuaded to be saved, that you would be willing to embrace salvation! You think you would; but if it be so, then I may say, though you would be saved, yet your custom of sin, your love to sin, and love to the world, will not suffer you; and these will still hinder you, unless you put on holy resolutions to break through them, and trample them under foot, and take this kingdom by a hand of violence, which God is so well pleased with. He is willingly overcome by that force, and gives this kingdom most willingly, where it

is so taken: it is not attained by slothfulness, and sitting still with folded hands; it must be invaded with strength of faith, with armies of prayers and tears; and they who set upon it thus are sure to take it.

Consider what we are doing, how we misplace our diligence on things that abide not, or we abide not to enjoy them. *We have no abiding city here*, saith the Apostle; but he adds that which comforts the citizens of the New Jerusalem, *We look for one to come, whose builder and maker is God.* Hear not these things idly, as if they concerned you not, but let them move you to resolution and actions. Say, as they said of *Canaan*, *It is a good land, let us go up and possess it.* Learn to use what you have here as travellers, and let your home, your inheritance, your treasure, be on high, which is by far the richest and the safest; and if it be so with you, then, *Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.*

Ver. 6. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

The same motives cannot beget contrary passions in the soul: therefore the Apostle reduces the mixture of sorrowing and rejoicing that is usual in the heart of a Christian, to the different causes of both; and shows which of the two hath the stronger cause, and is therefore always predominant in him who entertains and considers it aright.

His scope is, to stir up and strengthen spiritual joy in his afflicted brethren; and therefore, having set the matter of it before them in the preceding verses, he now applies it, and expressly opposes it to their distresses.

Some read these words exhortatively, *In which rejoice ye.* It is so intended, but I conceive it serves that end better indicatively, as we now read it, *In which ye rejoice.* It exhorts in a more insinuating and persuasive manner that it may be so, to urge it on them, that it is so. Thus St. Paul, (Acts xxvi. 27,) *King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.* And straight he answered, *Thou almost persuadest*

me to be a Christian. This implies how just and how reasonable it is, that the things spoken of should make them glad; in these they will rejoice, yea, do rejoice. Certainly, if you know and consider what the causes of your joy are, ye cannot choose but find it within you, and in such a measure as to swallow up all your temporary sorrows, how great and how many soever their causes be.

We are then to consider severally these bitter waters and the sweet, this sorrow and this joy. 1. In their springs; 2. In their streams.

And first, they are called *temptations*, and *manifold temptations*. The habits of Divine supernatural grace are not acquirable by human study, or by industry, or by exercise; they are of immediate infusion from Heaven; yet are they infused to the end that they may act and exercise themselves in the several conditions and occurrences of a Christian's life, and by that they grow stronger. Whatsoever oppositions or difficulties grace meets with in its acting, go under this general name of *temptations*. It is not necessary to reckon up the variety of senses of this word, in its full latitude; how God is said to tempt man, and how it is said that He tempts him not; how man tempts God, and how it is said that God is not tempted; how Satan tempts men, and men one another, and a man himself: all these are several acceptations of this word; but the *temptations* here meant, are the things by which men are tempted, and particularly the saints of God. And though there is nothing in the words, that may not agree to all sorts of temptations which the godly are subject to, yet I conceive it is particularly meant of their afflictions and distresses, as the Apostle James likewise uses it, chap. i. ver. 2.

And they are so called, because they give particular and notable proof of the temper of a Christian's spirit, and draw forth evidence both of the truth and the measure of the grace that is in them. If they fail and are foiled, as sometimes they are, this convinces them of that human frailty and weakness which are in them, and so humbles them, and drives them out of them-

selves to depend upon Another for more strength and better success in after-encounters. If they acquit themselves like Christians indeed, (the Lord managing and assisting that grace which he hath given them,) then all their valour, and strength, and victories turn to his praise, from whom they have received all.

A man is not only unknown to others but to himself, that hath never met with such difficulties as require faith, and Christian fortitude, and patience to surmount them. How shall a man know whether his meekness and calmness of spirit be real or not, while he meets with no provocation, nothing that contradicts or crosses him? But when somewhat sets upon him, that is in itself very unpleasant and grievous to him, and yet, if in that case he retains his moderation of spirit, and flies not out into impatience, either against God or men, this gives experiment of the truth and soundness of that grace within him; whereas standing water which is clear at top while it is untouched, yet if it have mud at the bottom, stir it a little, and it rises presently.

It is not altogether unprofitable, yea, it is great wisdom in Christians to be arming themselves against such temptations as may befal them hereafter, though they have not as yet met with them; to labour to overcome them beforehand, to suppose the hardest things that may be incident to them, and to put on the strongest resolutions they can attain unto. Yet all that is but an imaginary effort; and therefore there is no assurance that the victory is any more than imaginary too, till it come to action, and then, they that have spoken and thought very confidently, may prove but (as one said of the Athenians) *fortes in tabula*, patient and courageous in picture or fancy; and, notwithstanding all their arms, and dexterity in handling them by way of exercise, may be foully defeated when they are to fight in earnest. The children of Ephraim being armed, and carrying bows, (says the Psalmist, Psal. lxxviii. 9,) *yet turned back in the day of battle.* It is the battle that tries the soldier, and the storm the pilot. How would it appear that Christians can be themselves, not only patient, but cheerful in

poverty, in disgrace, and temptations, and persecutions, if it were not often their lot to meet with them? He who framed the heart, knows it to be but deceitful; and He who gives grace, knows the weakness and strength of it exactly: yet he is pleased to speak thus, that by afflictions and hard tasks he tries what is in the hearts of his children. For the word of God speaks to men, and therefore it speaks the language of the children of men: thus, Gen. xxii. 12. *Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.*

God delights to call forth his champions to meet with great temptations, to make them bear crosses of more than ordinary weight; as commanders in war put men of most valour and skill upon the hardest services. God sets some strong furious trial upon a strong Christian, made strong by his own grace, and by his victory makes it appear to the world, that though there is a great deal of the counterfeit coin of profession in religion, yet some there are who have the power, the reality of it, and that it is not an invention, but there is truth in it; that the invincible grace, the very Spirit of God dwells in the hearts of true believers; that he hath a number who do not only speak big, but do indeed and in good earnest despise the world, and overcome it by his strength. Some men take delight to see some kind of beasts fight together; but to see a Christian mind encountering some great affliction, and conquering it, to see his valour in not sinking at the hardest distresses of this life, nor the most frightful end of it, the cruellest kinds of death, for His sake,—this is (as one said) *dignum Deo spectaculum;* this is a combat which God delights to look upon, and He is not a mere beholder in it, for it is the power of His own grace that enables and supports the Christian in all those conflicts and temptations.

Through manifold temptations.] This expresses a multitude of temptations, and those too of divers kinds, many and manifold. It were no hard condition to have a trial now and then, with long ease and prosperity betwixt; but to be plied

with one affliction at the heels of another, to have them come thronging in by multitudes and of different kinds, uncouth, unaccustomed evils, such as a man hath not been acquainted with before, this is that which is often the portion of those who are the beloved of God: Psal. xlii. 7, *Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*

Ye are in heaviness.] This the Apostle blames not, but aims at the moderating of it. Seek not altogether to dry up this stream, but to bound it, and keep it within its banks Grace doth not destroy the life of nature, but adds to it a life more excellent; yea, grace doth not only permit, but requires some feeling of afflictions. There is an affected pride of spirit in some men, instead of patience, suitable only to the doctrine of the Stoics as it is usually taken; they strive not to feel at all the afflictions that are on them; but this is to *despise the correction of the Lord,* which is alike forbidden with fainting under it, Heb. xii. 5. We should not stop our hears, but *hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it,* as the Prophet speaks, Mic. vi. 9. Where there is no feeling at all, there can be no patience. Consider it as the hand of God, and thence argue the soul into submission, Psal. xxxix. 9, *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.* But this heaviness is mitigated, and set, as it were, within its banks, betwixt these two considerations, 1. The *utility,* 2. The *brevity* of it: the profitableness—and the shortness of it.

To a worldly man, great gain sweetens the hardest labour; and to a Christian, spiritual profit and advantage may do much to move him to take those afflictions well which are otherwise very unpleasant. Though *they are not joyous for the present,* yet this allays the sorrow of them, the fruit that grows out of them, *that peaceable fruit of righteousness,* Heb. xii. 11.

A bundle of folly is in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall beat it out, saith Solomon. Though the children of God are truly (as our Saviour calls them) the children of wisdom, yet, being renewed only in part, they are

not altogether free from those follies that call for this rod to beat them out, and sometimes have such a bundle of follies as require a bundle of rods to be spent upon it—*many and manifold afflictions.*

It is not an easy matter to be drawn from, nor to be beaten from, the love of this world, and this is what God mainly requires of his children, that they be not in love with the world, nor the things of it; for that is contrary to the love of God, and so far as that is entertained, this is wanting. And if in the midst of afflictions they are sometimes subject to this disease, how would it grow upon them with ease and prosperity! When they are beaten from one worldly folly or delight, they are ready, through nature's corruption, to lay hold upon some other,—being thrust out from it at one door, to enter at some other: as children unwilling to be weaned, if one breast be imbittered, they seek to the other; and therefore there must be somewhat to drive them from that too. Thus it is clear there is need, great need of afflictions, yea, of many afflictions, that the Saints be *chastened by the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world.* (1 Cor. xi. 32.)

Many resemblances there are for illustration of this truth, in things both of nature and of art, some common, and others choicer; but these are not needful. The experience of Christians tells them how easily they grow proud, and secure, and carnal, with a little ease, and when outward things go smoothly with them; and therefore what unhappiness were it for them to be very happy that way!

Let us learn, then, that in regard of our present frailty there is need of afflictions, and so not promise ourselves exemption, how calm soever our seas are for the present; and then for the number, and measure, and weight of them, to resign that wholly into the hands of our wise Father and Physician, who perfectly knows our mould and our maladies, and what kind and quantity of chastisement is needful for our cure.

Though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heavi-

ness.] The other consideration which moderates this heaviness is its shortness. Because we willingly forget eternity, therefore this moment seems much in our eyes: but if we could look upon it aright, of how little concernment is it what be our condition here! If it were as prosperous as we could wish or imagine, it is but for a *little season.* The rich man in the Gospel talked of many years, but *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee,* was the longest period. The many years are quickly drawn to a very great abatement, and if full of pains and griefs, those do help to put an end to themselves, and hasten to it. Well then might St. Austin say, *Hîc ure, cæde, modò ibi parcas,* Use me here as pleaseth thee, so as that hereafter it may be well with me.

Wherein.] This word, though it cannot fall amiss, being referred to any particular to which interpreters have appropriated it, yet it is rather to be taken as relative to the whole complex sense of the preceding verses, concerning the hope of glory. In this thing ye rejoice, that ye are begotten again,—that there is such an inheritance, and that you are made heirs of it,—that it is kept for you, and you for it,—that nothing can come betwixt you and it, to disappoint you of possessing and enjoying it,—that though there be many deserts, and mountains, and seas in the way, yet you are ascertained that you shall come safe thither.

This is but one thing, while the cause of your grief is *temptations,* and *manifold temptations,* yet this one thing weighs down all that multitude. The heart being grieved in one thing naturally looks out for its ease to some other; and there is usually somewhat that is a man's great comfort, that he turns his thoughts to, when he is crossed and afflicted in other things: but herein lies the folly of the world, that the things they choose for their refuge and comfort are such as may change themselves, and turn into discomfort and sorrow; but the godly man, who is the fool in the natural man's eyes, goes beyond all the rest in his wise choice in this. He rises above all that is subject to change, casts his anchor within the vail.

That in which he rejoiceth is still matter of joy unmoveable and unalterable; although not only his estate, but the whole world were turned upside down, yet this is the same, or rather in the Psalmist's words, *Though the earth were removed, and the greatest mountains cast into the sea, yet will not we fear.* (Psal. xlvi. 2.) When we shall receive that rich and pure and abiding inheritance, that salvation which shall be revealed in the last time, and when time itself shall cease to be, then there shall be no more reckoning of our joys by days and hours, but they shall run parallel with eternity. Then all our love, that is now scattered and parcelled out upon the vanities amongst which we are here, shall be united and gathered into one, and fixed upon God, and the soul filled with the delight of his presence.

The sorrow was limited and bounded by the considerations we spoke of; but this joy, this exultation, and leaping for joy (for so it is) is not bounded, it cannot be too much; its measure is, to know no measure. The afflictions, the matter of heaviness, are but a transient touch of pain; but that whereon this joy is built is most permanent—the measure of it cannot exceed, for the matter of it is infinite and eternal, beyond all hyperbole. There is no expression we have which can reach it, much less go beyond it; itself is the hyperbole, still surpassing all that can be said of it. Even in the midst of heaviness itself, such is this joy that it can maintain itself in the depth of sorrow; this oil of gladness still swims above, and cannot be drowned by all the floods of affliction, yea it is often most sweet in the greatest distress. The soul relishes spiritual joy best, when it is not glutted with worldly delights, but finds them turned into bitterness.

For application. In that we profess ourselves Christians, we all pretend to be the sons of God, and so heirs of this glory; and if each man were individually asked, he would say he hoped to attain it; but were there nothing else, this might abundantly convince us that the greatest part of us delude ourselves, and are deceived in this; for how few are there who

do really find this height of joy, of gladness and exultation, in their thoughts and hopes of it, who do daily refresh and glad themselves with the consideration of what is laid up for them above, more than with all their enjoyments here below!

Consider how the news of some small outward advantage that is to come to us raises our light, vain hearts, and makes them leap within us; and yet this news of a kingdom prepared for us (if we be indeed believers) stirs us not; our hearts are as little affected with it as if it concerned us not at all: and this is too clear an evidence against us that indeed it concerns us not, that our portion as yet is not in it.

In what a fool's paradise will men be with the thoughts of worthless things, and such things too as they shall never obtain, nor ever shall have any further being than what they have in their fancy! And how will men frequently roll over in their minds the thoughts of any pleasing good they hope for! And yet we, who say we have the hopes of the glory to come, can pass many days without one hour spent in the rejoicing thoughts of the happiness we look for! If any person of a mean condition for the present, were made sure to become very rich and be advanced to great honour within a week, and after that to live to a great age in that high estate, enjoying health and all imaginable pleasures; judge ye, whether in the few days betwixt the knowledge of those news and the enjoying of them, the thoughts of what he were to attain to would not be frequent with him, and be always welcome. There is no comparison betwixt all we can imagine this way, and the hopes we speak of; and yet, how seldom are our thoughts upon those things, and how faint and slender is our rejoicing in them! Can we deny that it is unbelief of these things that causeth this neglect and forgetting of them? The discourse, the tongue of men and angels cannot beget Divine belief of the happiness to come; only He who gives it, gives faith likewise to apprehend it, and lay hold upon it, and, upon our believing, to be filled with joy in the hopes of it.

Ver. 7. That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

THE way of the just (saith Solomon) *is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day.* Still making forward, and ascending towards perfection, moving as fast when they are clouded with affliction as at any time else; yea, all that seems to work against them, furthers them. Those graces that would possibly grow heavy and unwieldy, by too much ease, are held in breath, and increase their activity and strength by conflict. Divine grace, even in the heart of weak and sinful man, is an invincible thing. Drown it in the waters of adversity, it rises more beautiful, as not being drowned indeed, but only washed; throw it into the furnace of fiery trials, it comes out purer, and loses nothing but the dross which our corrupt nature mixes with it. Thus the Apostle here expounds the *if need be* of the former verse, and so justifies the joy in afflictions, which there he speaks of, by their utility and the advantage faith derives from them: it is so tried, that it shall appear in its full brightness at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The peculiar treasure of a Christian being the grace which he receives from Heaven, and particularly that sovereign grace of Faith, whatsoever he can be assured will better him any way in this, he will not only bear patiently, but gladly embrace it. (See Rom. v. 3.) Therefore the Apostle sets this before his brethren in those words of this verse which express, 1. The worth and excellency of faith; 2. The usefulness of temptations in relation to it.

1*st*, The worth and excellency of faith. The trial of faith is called *more precious*, a work of more worth than the trial of gold, because faith itself is of more value than gold. The Apostle chooses this comparison, as fitting his purpose for the illustration of both,—the worth of faith, and likewise the use

f temptations, representing the one by gold, and the other by the trying of gold in the fire.

The worth of gold is, 1. Real, the purest and most precious of all metals, having many excellent properties beyond them, as they who write of the nature of gold observe. 2. Far greater in the esteem and opinion of men. See how men hurry up and down, over sea and land, unwearied in their pursuit, with hazard of life, and often with the loss of uprightness and a good conscience; and not only thus esteem it in itself, but make it the rule of their esteem one of another, valuing men less or more as they are more or less furnished with it. And we see at what a height this is; for things we would commend much, we borrow its name to describe them, e. g., *Golden mediocrity;* and that age which they would call the best of all, they name it the *Golden Age;* and as Seneca observes, describing heavenly things, (as *Ovid* the sun's palace and chariot,) still *Gold* is the word for all.

And the Holy Scriptures, descending to our reach, do set forth the riches of the new Jerusalem by it, (Rev. xxi.,) and the excellency of Christ, (Cant. v. 11, 14.) And here, the preciousness of faith, whereof Christ is the object, is said to be *more precious than gold.*

I will not insist in the parallel of faith with gold, in the other qualities of it,—as that it is pure and solid as gold, and that it is most ductile, and malleable as gold; beyond all other metals, it plies any way with the will of God. But then faith truly enriches the soul; and as gold answers all things, so faith gives the soul propriety in all the rich consolations of the gospel, in all the promises of life and salvation, in all needful blessings; it draws virtue from Christ to strengthen itself, and all other graces.

And thus it is not only precious as gold, but goes far above the comparison; it is *more precious*, yea, *much more precious*, 1. In its original: the other is digged out of the bowels of the earth; but the mine of this gold is above, it comes from heaven. 2. In its nature, answerable to its original, it is immate-

rial, spiritual, and pure. We refine gold and make it purer, but when we receive faith pure in itself, we mix dross with it, and make it impure by the alloy of unbelief. 3. In its endurance, flowing from the former; it perisheth not. Gold is a thing in itself corruptible and perishing, and to particular owners it perisheth in their loss of it, they being deprived of it in any way.

Other graces are likewise tried in the same furnace; but Faith is named as the root of all the rest. Sharp afflictions give a Christian a trial of his love to God, whether it be single, and for himself or not; for then it will be the same when he strikes as when he embraces, and in the fire of affliction will rather grow the hotter, and be more taken off from the world, and set upon him. Again, the grace of patience is put particularly upon trial in distresses. But both these spring from Faith; for love rises from a right and strong belief of the goodness of God, and patience from a persuasion of the wisdom and love of God, and the truth of his promises. He hath said, *I will not fail thee*, and that we shall not be tempted above our strength, and he will give the issue. Now the belief of these things causes patience: *The trial of faith worketh patience.* (James i. 3.) For therefore doth the Christian resign up himself, and all that concerns him, his trials, the measure and length of them all, unto God's disposal, because he knows that he is in the hands of a wise and loving father. Thus the trial of these and other particular graces doth still resolve into this, and is comprised under the trial of faith. This brings us,

2dly. To the usefulness of temptations in relation to it.

This trial (as that of gold) may be for a two-fold end. 1. For experiment of the truth and pureness of a Christian's faith. 2. To refine it yet more, and to raise it to a higher pitch or degree of pureness.

1. The furnace of affliction shows upright, real faith to be such indeed, remaining still the same even in the fire, the same that it was, undiminished, as good gold loses none of its quantity in the fire. Doubtless many are deceived, in time of ease and

prosperity, with imaginary faith and fortitude: so that there may be still some doubt, while a man is underset with outward helps, as riches, friends, esteem, &c., whether he leans upon those, or upon God, who is an invisible support, though stronger than all that are visible, and is the peculiar and alone stay of faith in all conditions. But when all these outward props are plucked away from a man, then it will be manifest whether something else upholds him or not; for if there be nothing else, then he falls; but if his mind stands firm and unremoved as before, then it is evident he laid not his weight upon these things which he had then about him, but was built upon a foundation, though not seen, which is able alone to stay him, although he be not only frustrated of all other supports, but beaten upon with storms and tempests; as our Saviour says, *the house fell not, because it was founded on a rock,* (Matt. vii. 25).

This testified the truth of *David's* faith, who found it stay his mind upon God, when there was nothing else near that could do it; *I had fainted, unless I had believed.* (Psal. xxvii. 13.) So in his strait, (1 Sam. xxx. 6,) where it is said, that *David was greatly distressed; but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.* Thus, Psal. lxxxiii. 26, *My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* The heart's natural strength of spirit and resolution may bear up under outward weakness, or the failing of the flesh; but when the heart itself fails, which is the strength of the flesh, what shall strengthen it? nothing but God, *who is the strength of the heart, and its portion for ever.* Thus faith worketh alone, when the case suits that of the Prophet's, (Hab. iii. 17,) *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine,* &c., *yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

In spiritual trials, which are the sharpest and most fiery of all, when the furnace is within a man, when God doth not only shut up his loving-kindness from his feeling, but seems to shut it up in hot displeasure, when he writes bitter things

against him, yet then to depend upon him, and wait for his salvation, and the more he smites, the more to cleave to him,—this is not only a true, but a strong, and very refined faith indeed. Well might *he* say, *When I am tried I shall come forth as gold*, who could say that word, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:* though I saw, as it were, his hand lifted up to destroy me, yet from that same hand would I expect salvation.

2. As the furnace shows faith to be what it is, so also it betters it, and makes it more precious and purer than it was.

The graces of the Spirit, as they come from the hand of God who infuses them, are nothing but pureness; but being put into a heart where sin dwells, (which till the body be dissolved and taken to pieces, cannot be fully purged out,) there they are mixed with corruption and dross: and particularly faith is mixed with unbelief, and love of earthly things, and dependance upon the creature, if not more than God, yet together with him; and for this is the furnace needful, that the soul may be purified from this dross, and made more sublime and spiritual in believing. It is a hard task, and many times comes but slowly forward, to teach the heart, by discourse and speculation, to sit loose from the world at all sides, not to cleave to the best things in it, though we be compassed about with them, *though riches do increase*, yet *not to set our hearts on them*, Psal. lxii. 10, not to trust in such *uncertain things* as they are, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Therefore God is pleased to choose the more effectual way to teach his own the right and pure exercise of faith, either by withholding or withdrawing those things from them. He makes them relish the sweetness of spiritual comfort, by depriving them of those outward comforts whereon they were in most danger to have doated to excess, and so to have forgotten themselves and him. When they are reduced to necessity, and experimentally trained up easily to let go their hold of any thing earthly, and to stay themselves only upon their rock, this is the very refining of their faith, by those losses and afflictions wherewith they

are exercised. They who learn bodily exercises, as fencing, &c., are not taught by sitting still, and hearing rules, or seeing others practise, but they learn by exercising themselves. The way to profit in the art of believing, or of coming to this spiritual activity of faith, is, to be often put to that work in the most difficult way, to make up all wants and losses in God, and to sweeten the bitterest griefs with his loving kindness.

Might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory.] This is the end that is intended, and shall be certainly obtained by all these hot trials. Faith shall come through them all, and *shall be found unto praise*, &c. An unskilful beholder may think it strange to see gold thrown into the fire, and left there for a time; but he that puts it there would be loth to lose it; his purpose is to make some costly piece of work of it. Every believer gives himself to Christ, and he undertakes to present them blameless to the Father; not one of them shall be lost, nor one drachm of their faith; they shall be found, and their faith shall be found, when He appears. That faith which is here in the furnace, shall be then made up into a crown of pure gold: *it shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory.*

This praise, and honour, and glory may be referred, either to believers themselves, according to the Apostle St. Paul's expression, Rom. ii. 7, or to Christ who appears: but the two will agree well together, that it be both to their praise, and to the praise of Christ; for, certainly, all their praise and glory shall terminate in the glory of their head—Christ, who is God blessed for ever. They have each their crown; but their honour is, to cast them all down before his throne. *He shall be glorified in his Saints, and admired in them that believe.* They shall be glorious in him; and therefore in all their glory he shall be glorified: for as they have derived their glory from him, it shall all return back to him again.

At the appearance of Jesus Christ.] This denotes the time when this shall come to pass; for Christ is faithful and true; he hath promised to come again, and to judge the world in righteousness, and he will come and will not tarry. He

shall judge righteously in that day, who was himself unrighteously judged here on earth. It is called the *Revelation;* all other things shall be revealed in that day, the most hidden things, good and evil, shall be unvailed; but it is eminently the day of *His Revelation:* it shall be by his light, by the brightness of his coming, that all other things shall be revealed; but he himself shall be the worthiest sight of all. All eyes shall behold him. He shall then gloriously appear before all men and angels, and shall by all be acknowledged to be the Son of God, and judge of the world: some shall with joy know him, and acknowledge him to be so, others to their horror and amazement. How beautiful shall he be to those who love him, when he as the glorious head shall appear with his whole body mystical together with him!

Then, the glory and praise which all the saints shall be honoured with, shall recompense fully all the scorns, and ignominies, and distresses, they have met with here. And they shall shine the brighter for them. Oh! if we considered often that solemn day, how light should we set by the opinions of men, and all outward hardships that can befal us! How easily should we digest dispraise and dishonour here, and pass through all cheerfully, provided we may be then found in him, and so partakers of *praise, and glory, and honour, in that day of his appearing!*

Ver. 8. Whom having not seen, ye love: in whom, though now ye see him not, yet, believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.
Ver. 9. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

It is a parodox to the world which the Apostle hath asserted, that there is a joy which can subsist in the midst of sorrow; therefore he insists in confirmation of it, and in all these words proves it to the full, yea, with advantage, that the saints have not only some measure of joy in the griefs that abound upon them here, but excellent and eminent joy, such as makes good all that can be said of it, such as cannot be spoken too much of, for it is *unspeakable*, nor too much magnified, for it is *glorious*.

To evidence the truth of this, and to confirm his brethren in the experienced knowledge of it, he expresses here more particularly and distinctly the causes of this their joy, which are,—

1. The *object* or *matter* of it; 2. The *apprehension* and *appropriation* of that *object:* which two conjoined, are the entire cause of all rejoicing.

1. The *object* is Jesus Christ, ver. 8, and the salvation purchased by him, ver. 9. For these two cannot be severed; and these two verses which speak of them, require (as is evident by their connexion) to be considered together.

2. The apprehension of these is set forth, first, negatively, not by bodily sight; secondly, positively: whereas it might seem to abate the certainty and liveliness of their rejoicing, that it is of things they had not seen, nor do yet see, this is abundantly made up by three for one, each of them more excellent than the mere bodily sight of Christ in the flesh, which many had who were never the better by it: the three things are, those three prime Christian graces, faith, love, and hope; the two former in ver. 8, the third in ver. 9.—Faith in Christ begetting love to him, and both these giving assured hope of salvation by him, making it as certain to them, as if it were already in their hand, and they in possession of it. And from all these together results this exultation, or leaping for joy, *joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

This is that *one thing* that so much concerns us; and therefore we mistake very far, and forget our own highest interest too much, when we either speak or hear of it slightly, and apply not our hearts to it. What is it that all our thoughts and endeavours drive at? What means all that we are doing in the world? Though we take several ways to it, and wrong ways for the most part, yea such ways as lead not to it, but set us further off from it; yet what we all seek after by all our labour under the sun, is something that may be matter of contentment and rejoicing to us when we have attained it. Now here it is, and in vain is it sought for elsewhere. And for this

end it is represented to you, that it may be yours, if ye will entertain it; not only that you may know this to be a truth, that in Jesus Christ is laid up true consolation and rejoicing, that he is the magazine and treasury of it, but that you may know how to bring him home into your hearts, and lodge him there, and so to have the spring of joy within you.

That which gives full joy to the soul, must be something that is higher and better than itself. In a word, He who made it, can alone make it glad after this manner, with *unspeakable and glorious joy.* But the soul, while remaining guilty of rebellion against Him, and unreconciled, cannot behold him but as an enemy; any belief that it can have of Him while it is in that posture, is not such as can fetch *love*, and *hope*, and so *rejoicing*, but what the faith of devils produceth, only begetting terror and trembling. But the light of his countenance shining in the face of his Son the Mediator, gladdens the heart; and it is the looking upon him so, that causeth the soul to *believe*, and *love*, and *hope*, and *rejoice.* Therefore the Apostle, in his description of the estate of the Gentiles before Christ was preached to them, (Eph. ii.,) joins these together: *Without Christ*,—that was the cause of all the rest,—therefore, without comfort in the promises, *without hope, and without God in the world.* So he is here by our Apostle expressed as the object. In all these, therefore, he is the matter of our joy, because our *faith*, and *love*, and *hope of salvation* do centre in him.

The Apostle writing to the dispersed Jews, many of whom had not known or seen Christ in the flesh, commends their love and faith for this reason, that it did not depend upon bodily sight, but was pure, and spiritual, and made them of the number of those whom our Saviour himself pronounces *blessed, who have not seen, and yet believe.* You saw him not when he dwelt amongst men, and walked too and fro, preaching and working miracles. Many of those who did then hear and see him, believed not; yea they scoffed, and hated, and persecuted him, and in the end crucified him: you have seen none of all

those things, yet having heard the Gospel which declares him, *you have believed.*

Thus *observe*, the working or not working of faith, doth not depend upon the difference of the external ministry and gifts of men; for what greater difference can there be that way, than betwixt the master and the servants, betwixt the great prophet himself, and his weak sinful messengers? and yet many of those who saw and heard him in person, were not converted, believed not in him; and thousands who never saw him, were converted by his Apostles, and as it seems, even some of those who were some way accessory to his death, yet were brought to repentance by this same Apostle's sermon. (See Acts ii.)

Learn, then, to look above the outward ministry, and any difference that in God's dispensation can be there; and know, that if Jesus Christ himself were on earth, and now preaching amongst us, yet might his incomparable words be unprofitable to us, not being mixed with faith in the hearers. But where that is, the meanest and the most despicable conveyance of his message, received with humility and affection, will work blessed effects.

Whom not seeing yet believing.] Faith elevates the soul not only above sense and sensible things, but above reason itself. As reason corrects the errors which sense might occasion, so supernatural faith corrects the errors of natural reason, judging according to sense.

The sun seems less than the wheel of a chariot, but reason teaches the philosopher that it is much bigger than the whole earth, and the cause that it seems so little is its great distance. The naturally wise man is equally deceived by this carnal reason, in his estimate of Jesus Christ *the Sun of Righteousness*, and the cause is the same, his great distance from him; as the Psalmist speaks of the wicked, (Psal. x. 5,) *Thy judgments are far above, out of his sight.* He accounts Christ and his glory a smaller matter than his own gain, honour, or pleasure; for these are near him, and he sees their quantity to the full, and counts them bigger, yea far more worth than they are indeed.

But the Apostle St. Paul, and all who are enlightened by the same spirit, they know by faith, which is divine reason, that the excellency of Jesus Christ far surpasses the worth of the whole earth, and all things earthly. (Phil. iii. 7, 8.)

To give a right assent to the Gospel of Christ is impossible, without divine and saving faith infused in the soul. To believe that the eternal Son of God clothed himself with human flesh, and dwelt amongst men in a tabernacle like theirs, and suffered death in the flesh; that he who was Lord of life hath freed us from the sentence of eternal death; that he broke the bars and chains of death and rose again; that he went up into Heaven, and there at the Father's right hand sits in our flesh, and that glorified above the Angels; this is the *great mystery of Godliness*. And a part of this mystery is, that *he is believed on in the world.* (1 Tim. ii. 16.) This, natural men may discourse of, and that very knowingly, and give a kind of natural credit to it, as to a history that may be true; but firmly to believe that there is *divine truth* in all these things, and to have a persuasion of it stronger than of the very things we see with our eyes,—such an assent as this is the peculiar work of the Spirit of God, and is certainly saving faith.

The soul that so believes, cannot choose but love. It is commonly true that the eye is the ordinary door by which love enters into the soul, and it is true in respect of this love; though it is denied of the eye of sense, yet, (you see,) it is ascribed to the eye of faith, *though you have not seen him, you love him, because you believe:* which is to see him spiritually. Faith, indeed, is distinguished from that vision which shall be in glory: but it is the vision of the kingdom of grace, it is the eye of the new creature, that quick-sighted eye which pierces all the visible heavens, and sees above them, which *looks to things that are not seen*, (2 Cor. iv. 18,) *and is the evidence of things not seen*, (Heb. xi. 1,) and *sees him who is invisible*, (ver. 27). It is possible that a person may be much beloved upon the report of his worth and virtues, and upon a picture of him lively drawn, before sight of the party so commended,

and represented; but certainly when he is seen, and found answerable to the former, it raises the affection already begun, to a far greater height. We have the report of the perfections of Jesus Christ in the Gospel; yea, so clear a description of him, that it gives a picture of him, and that, together with the sacraments, is the only lawful, and the only lively picture of our Saviour. (Gal. iii. 1.) Now faith believes this report, and beholds this picture, and so lets in the love of Christ to the soul. But further, it gives a particular experimental knowledge of Christ, and acquaintance with him; it causes the soul to find all that is spoken of him in the word, and his beauty there represented, to be abundantly true: makes it really taste of his sweetness, and by that possesses the heart more strongly with his love, persuading it of the truth of those things, not by reasons and arguments, but by an inexpressible kind of evidence, which they only know who have it. Faith persuades a Christian of these two things which the philosopher gives as the causes of all love, *beauty* and *propriety*, the loveliness of Christ in himself, and our interest in him.

The former it effectuates not only by the first apprehending and believing of those his excellencies and beauty, but by frequent beholding of him, and eyeing him in whom all perfection dwells, and it looks so oft on him, till it sets the very impression of his image (as it were) upon the soul, so that it can never be blotted out and forgotten. The latter it doth by that particular *uniting* act which makes him our God and our Saviour.

Ye love.] The distinctions which some make in *love*, need not be taken as importing differing kinds, but different actings, of the same love, by which we may try our so much pretended love of Christ, which in truth is so rarely found. There will then be in this love, if it be genuine, these three qualities, *good-will*, *delight*, and *desire*.

1*st*, *Good-will*, earnest wishing, and (as we can) promoting God's glory, and stirring up others so to do. They who *seek more their own things than the things of Jesus Christ*, more their own praise and esteem than his, are strangers to this

divine love; for *she seeks not her own things.* The bitter root of self-love is most hard to pluck up; this strongest and sweetest love of Christ alone doth it actually though gradually. This love makes the soul like the lower Heaven, slow in its own motion, most swift in the motion of that first which wheels it about; so, the higher degree of love, the more swift. It loves the hardest tasks and greatest difficulties, where it may perform God service, either in doing or in suffering for him. *It is strong as death, and many waters cannot quench it.* (Eccles. viii. 6, 7.) The greater the task is, the more real are the testimony and expression of love, and therefore the more acceptable to God.

2dly, There is in true love, a complacency and *delight* in God; a conformity to his will; a loving what he loves: it is studious of his will, ever seeking to know more clearly what it is that is most pleasing to him, contracting a likeness to God in all his actions, by conversing with him, by frequent contemplation of God, and looking on his beauty. As the eye lets in this affection, so it serves it constantly, and readily looks that way which love directs it. Thus the soul possessed with this love of Jesus Christ, the soul which hath its eye much upon him, often thinking on his former sufferings and present glory, the more it looks upon Christ, the more it loves; and still the more it loves, the more it delights to look upon him.

3dly, There is in true love a *desire;* for it is but small beginnings and tastes of his goodness which the soul hath here; therefore it is still looking out and longing for the day of marriage. The time is sad and wearisome, and seems much longer than it is, while it is detained here. *I desire to be dissolved* (saith St. Paul) *and to be with Christ.* (Phil. i. 23.)

God is the sum of all things lovely. Thus excellently Gregory Nazianzen expresseth himself, Orat. 1: "If I have any "possessions, health, credit, learning, this is all the content- "ment I have of them, that I have somewhat I may despise "for Christ, who is *totus desiderabilis, et totum desiderabile,* "(the all-desirable one, the every thing desirable)." And this love is the sum of all he requires of us; it is that which makes

all our meanest services acceptable, and without which all we offer to him is distasteful. God doth deserve our love, not only by his matchless excellency and beauty, but by his matchless love to us, and that is the strongest loadstone of love. *He hath loved me*, saith the Apostle, Gal. ii. 20. How appears that? In no less than this, *He hath given himself for me.* Certainly, then, there is no clearer character of our love than this, to give ourselves to him who hath so loved us, and given himself for us.

This affection must be bestowed somewhere; there is no man but hath some prime choice, somewhat that is the predominant delight of his soul; will it not then be our wisdom to make the worthiest choice? seeing it is offered us, it is extreme folly to reject it.

Grace doth not pluck up by the roots and wholly destroy the natural passions of the mind, because they are distempered by sin!—that were an extreme remedy to cure by killing, and heal by cutting off; no, but it corrects the distemper in them; it dries not up this main stream of love, but purifies it from the mud which it is full of in its wrong course, or turns it into its right channel, by which it may run into happiness, and empty itself into the ocean of goodness. The Holy Spirit turns the love of the soul towards God in Christ, for in that way only can it apprehend his love: so then Jesus Christ is the first *object* of this Divine love; he is *medium unionis*, through whom God conveys the sense of his love to the soul, and receives back its love to Himself.

And if we will consider his incomparable beauty, we may look on it in the Holy Scriptures, particularly in that divine song of loves, wherein Solomon borrows all the beauties of the creatures, dips his pencil in all their several excellencies, to set him forth unto us, who is the *chief of ten thousands*. There is an inseparable intermixture of love with belief, and a pious affection in receiving Divine truth; so that in effect, as we distinguish them, they are mutually strengthened, the one by the other; and so, though it seem a circle, it is a divine one, and

falls not under censure of the schools' pedantry. If you ask How shall I do to *love?* I answer, *Believe.* If you ask, How shall I *believe?* I answer, *Love.* Although the expressions to a carnal mind are altogether unsavoury, by grossly mistaking them, yet, to a soul taught to read and hear them, by any measure of that same spirit of love wherewith they were penned, they are full of heavenly and unutterable sweetness.

Many directions, as to the means of begetting and increasing this love of Christ, may be here offered, and they who delight in number may multiply them; but surely this one will comprehend the greatest and best part, if not all of them: *Believe, and you shall love; believe much, and you shall love much;* labour for strong and deep persuasions of the glorious things which are spoken of Christ, and this will command love. Certainly, did men indeed believe his worth, they would accordingly love him; for the reasonable creature cannot but affect that most which it firmly believes to be worthiest of affection. O! this mischievous unbelief is that which makes the heart cold and dead towards God. Seek then to believe Christ's excellency in himself, and his love to us, and our interest in him; and this will kindle such a fire in the heart, as will make it ascend in a sacrifice of love to him.

The signs likewise of this love may be multiplied, according to the many fruits and workings of it; but in them all, itself is its own most infallible evidence. When the soul finds that all its obedience and endeavour to keep the commands of Jesus Christ, which himself makes its character, do flow from love, then it is true and sincere; for do or suffer what you will, without love all passes for nothing; all are ciphers without it, they signify nothing. (1 Cor. xiii.)

This is the message of the Gospel, and that which the ministry aims at; and therefore the ministers ought to be suitors, not for themselves, but for Christ, to espouse souls to him, and to bring in many hearts to love him. And certainly, this is the most compendious way to persuade to all other Christian duties: for this is to converse with Jesus Christ, and where his

love is, no other incentive will be needful; for love delights in the presence and converse of the party loved. If we are to persuade to duties of the second table, the sum of those is, love to our brethren, resulting from the love of Christ, which diffuseth such a sweetness into the soul, that it is all love, and meekness, and gentleness, and long-suffering.

If times be for suffering, love will make the soul not only bear, but welcome the bitterest afflictions of life, and the hardest kinds of death for his sake. In a word, there is in love a sweet constraint, or tying of the heart to all obedience and duty.

The love of God is requisite in ministers for their preaching of the word; so our Saviour to St. Peter, John xxi. 15. *Peter, lovest thou me? then feed my lambs.* It is requisite for the people that they receive the truth in the love of it, and that Christ preached may be entertained in the soul, and embraced by faith and love.

You that have made choice of Christ for your love, let not your hearts slip out, to renew your wonted base familiarity with sin; for that will bring new bitterness to your souls, and at least for some time will deprive you of the sensible favour of your beloved Jesus. Delight always in God, and give him your whole heart; for he deserves it all, and is a satisfying good to it. The largest heart is all of it too straight for the riches of consolation which he brings with him. Seek to increase in this love; and though it is at first weak, yet labour to find it daily rise higher, and burn hotter and clearer, and consume the dross of earthly desires.

Receiving the end of your faith.] Although the soul that believes and loves is put in present possession of God, as far as it is capable in its sojourning here, yet it desires a full enjoyment, which it cannot attain to without removing hence. *While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord,* saith the Apostle. And because they are assured of that happy exchange, that being untied and freed of this body, they shall be present with the Lord, having his own word for

it, that *where he is they shall be also;* this begets such an assured hope, as bears the name of *Possession.* Therefore it is said here *Receiving the end of your faith.*

This receiving likewise flows from faith. Faith apprehends the present truth of the Divine promises, and so makes the things to come, present; and hope looks out to their after-accomplishment, which, if the promises be true, as faith avers, then hope hath good reason firmly to expect. This desire and hope are the very wheels of the soul which carry it on, and faith is the common axis on which they rest.

In these words there are two things: I. The good hoped for in Christ so believed on and loved; II. The assuredness of the hope itself: yea, it is as sure as if it were already accomplished.

I. As for the good hoped for, it consists, 1. In the nature of it, viz., the *salvation of their soul;* 2. In a relative property of it, *the end of their faith.*

1*st.* The nature of it is *salvation, and salvation of the soul:* it imports full deliverance from all kinds of misery, and the safe possession of perfect happiness, when the soul shall be out of the reach of all adversaries and adverse accidents, no more subjected to those evils which are properly its own, namely, the conscience of sin, and fear of wrath, and sad defections; nor yet subject to those other evils which it endured by society with the body—outward distresses and afflictions, persecutions, poverty, diseases, &c.

It is called *salvation of the soul:* not excluding the body from the society of that glory, when it shall be raised and reunited to the soul; but because the soul is of itself an immortal substance, and both the more noble part of man, and the prime subject both of grace and glory, and because it arrives first at that blessedness, and for a time leaves the body in the dust to do homage to its original; therefore it is alone named here. But Jesus is the Saviour of the body too, and he shall, at his coming, *change our vile bodies, and make them like his glorious body.*

2dly, We have the relative property of this hope,—*The end of your faith*, the *end* or *reward;* for it is both. It is the *end*, either at which faith aims, or wherein it ceaseth. It is the *reward*, not of their works, nor of faith, as a work deserving it, but as the condition of the new covenant, which God, according to the tenor of that covenant, first works in his own, and then rewards as if it were their work. And this salvation, or fruition of Christ, is the proper reward of faith, which believes in him unseen, and so obtains that happy sight. It is the proper work of faith to believe what thou seest not, and the reward of faith to see what thou hast believed.

II. This is the certainty of their hope, that it is as if they had already received it. If the promise of God and the merit of Christ hold good, then they who believe in him, and love him, are made sure of salvation. The promises of God in Christ *are not yea and nay; but they are in him yea, and in him amen.* Sooner may the rivers run backward, and the course of the heavens change, and the frame of nature be dissolved, than any one soul that is united to Christ Jesus, by faith and love, can be severed from him, and so fall short of the salvation hoped for in him; and this is the matter of their rejoicing.

Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable.] *The natural man*, says the Apostle, *receiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishness unto him;* and he adds the reason why he canno know them, *for they are spiritually discerned.* He hath none of that faculty by which they are discerned. There is a vast disproportion betwixt those things and nature's highest capacity; it cannot work beyond its sphere. Speak to the natural man, of the matter of spiritual grief, the sense of guiltiness, and the apprehension of God's displeasure, or the hiding of his favour and the light of his countenance from the soul; these things stir not him, he knows not what they mean. Speak to him again of the peace of conscience, and sense of God's love, and the joy that arises hence; he is no less a stranger to that. *Mourn to him, and he laments not; pipe to him, and he*

dances not, as our Saviour speaks, Matt. xi. 17. But as it there follows, ver. 19, there is a wisdom in these things, though they seem folly and nonsense to the foolish world, and this *wisdom is justified of her own children.*

Having said somewhat already of the Causes of this spiritual joy, which the Apostle here speaks of, it remains that we consider these two things: 1. How joy ariseth from these causes; 2. The excellency of this joy, as it is here expressed.

There is here a solid, sufficient good, and the heart made sure of it, being partly put in present possession of it, and having a most certain hope of all the rest. And what more can be required to make it joyful? Jesus Christ, the treasure of all blessings, received and united to the soul, by faith, and love, and hope!

Is not Christ the light and joy of the nations? such a light as Abraham, at the distance of many ages, of more than two thousand years, yet saw by faith, and seeing, rejoiced in. Besides this brightness, which makes light a joyful object, light is often in Scripture put for joy. Christ, who is this light, brings salvation with him: he is the *Sun of Righteousness*, and there is *healing under his wings. I bring you*, said the angel, *good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all people.* And their song hath in it the matter of that joy, *Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will toward men.* (Luke ii. 10, 14.)

But to the end we may rejoice in Christ, we must find him ours; otherwise, the more excellent he is, the more cause hath the heart to be sad, while it hath no portion in him. *My spirit hath rejoiced* (said the blessed Virgin) *in God my Saviour.* (Luke i. 47.)

Thus, having spoken of our communion with Christ, the Apostle adds, 1 John i. 7, *These things I write, that your joy may be full.* Faith worketh this joy, by uniting the soul to Christ, and applying his merits, from the application of which arises the pardon of sin; and so that load of misery, which was the great cause of sorrow, is removed; and so soon as the

soul finds itself lightened and unloaded of that burden which was sinking it to hell, it cannot choose but leap for joy, in the ease and refreshment it finds. Therefore that Psalm which David begins with the doctrine of the pardon of sin, he ends with an exhortation to *rejoicing*. *Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered:* (Psal. xxxii. 1:) thus he begins, but he ends, *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.* St. Peter speaks to his hearers of the remission of sins, Acts ii. 38, and at ver. 41 it is added, *They received his words gladly.* And our Saviour joins these two together, *Be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Thus, Isa. lxi. 1, good tidings of liberty to captives are proclaimed, and a notable change there is of their estate, *who mourn in Zion, giving them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.* Think with what joy the long imprisoned debtor, drowned in debt, receives a full discharge, and his liberty; or a condemned malefactor the news of his pardon, and this will somewhat resemble it, but yet fall far short of the joy which faith brings, by bringing Christ to the soul, and so forgiveness of sins in him.

But this is not all. This believing soul is not only a debtor acquitted and set free, but enriched besides with a new and great estate; not only a pardoned malefactor, but withal highly preferred and advanced to honour, having a right, by the promises, *to the unsearchable riches of Christ*, as the Apostle speaks, and is received into favour with God, and unto the dignity of sonship, taken *from the dunghill, and set with princes.* (Psal. cxiii. 8.)

As there is joy from Faith, so also from Love. Though this is in itself the most sweet and delightful passion of the soul, yet, as we foolishly misplace it, it proveth often full of bitterness; but being set upon Jesus Christ, the only right and worthy object, it causeth this unspeakable delight and rejoicing.

First, It is matter of joy to have bestowed our love so wor-

thily. When our Saviour seems to withdraw himself, and sometimes saddens the soul that loves him, with *absences*, in regard of sense, yet even in those sad times, the soul delights to love him, and there is a pleasure in the very pains it hath in seeking after him. And this it knows, that his mercies are everlasting, and that he cannot be long unkind, but will return and speak comfortably unto it.

Secondly, Our love to Christ gives us assurance of His to us, so that we have not only chosen worthily, but shall not be frustrated and disappointed; and it assures us of his, not as following, but as preceding and causing ours; for our love to Jesus Christ is no other than the reflex of his on us. *Wine maketh glad the heart*, but *thy love is better than wine*, saith the Spouse. And having this persuasion, that he *hath loved us, and washed us in his blood*, and forgets us not in our conflicts, that though he himself is in his glory, yet that he intercedes for us there, and will bring us thither, what condition can befal us so hard, but we may rejoice in it, and in them, so far as we are sure to arrive at that full salvation and the fruition of him who hath purchased it?

Then there is the third cause of our rejoicing, *viz.*, our *Hope*. Now hope is our *anchor fixed within the vail*, which stays us against all the storms that beat upon us in this troublesome sea that we are tossed upon. The soul which strongly believes and loves, may confidently hope to see what it believes, and to enjoy what it loves, and in that it may rejoice. It may say whatsoever hazards, whether outward or inward, whatsoever afflictions and temptations I endure, yet this one thing puts me out of hazard, and in that I will rejoice, that the salvation of my soul depends not upon my own strength, but is in my Saviour's hand: *My life is hid with Christ in God; and when he who is my life shall appear, I likewise shall appear with him in glory*. The childish world are hunting shadows, and gaping and hoping after they know not what; but the believer can say, *I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have com-*

mitted to him against that day. Now we must have not only a right to these things, but withal there must be frequent consideration of them to produce joy. The soul must often view them, and so rejoice. *My meditation of him shall be sweet,* saith David. *I will be glad in the Lord.* (Psal. civ. 34.) The godly, failing in this, deprive themselves of much of that joy they might have; and they who are most in these sublime thoughts have the highest and truest joy.

The excellency of this joy, the Apostle here expresseth by these two words, *Unspeakable,* and *Full of glory,*

That it is *unspeakable,* no wonder, seeing the matter of it is inconceivable; it is an infinite good. God reconciled in Jesus Christ, and testifying and sealing his love unto the soul, and giving assured hope of that blessed vision of eternity,—what more unspeakable than this? And for the same reason it is *glorious,* or glorified joy, having the highest and most glorious object; for it derives all its excellency from thence.

Unspeakable.] The best worldly joys are easily speakable; they may be expressed to the utmost, yea, usually more is spoken of them than they are indeed. Their name is beyond their worth; they are very seldom found, upon experience, equal to the opinion and expectation that men have of them. But this spiritual joy is above the report any can make of it: say what they can of it who are of happiest expression, yet when a man comes to know it in his own breast, he will say, (as that queen said of Solomon's wisdom,) *the half was not told me of it.*

Again, earthly joys are inglorious; many of which men are ashamed of, and those that seem most plausible, yet are below the excellency of the soul, and cannot fill it: but the joys which arise from union with Christ, as they are most avowable a man needs not blush to own them,—so they are truly contenting and satisfying, and that is their glory, and the cause why we may glory in them. *My soul shall make her boast in God,* says David. (Psal. xxxiv. 2.)

For *Application* of all this. If these things were believed,

we should hearken no more to the foolish prejudice which the world hath taken up against religion, and wherewith Satan endeavours to possess men's hearts, that they may be scared from the ways of holiness: they think it a sour, melancholy life which hath nothing but sadness and mourning in it. But, to remove this prejudice,

Consider, 1. Religion debars not from the lawful delights which are taken in natural things, but teaches the moderate and regular use of them, which is far the sweeter; for things lawful in themselves are in their excess sinful, and so prove bitterness in the end. And if in some cases it requires the forsaking of lawful enjoyments, as of pleasure, or profits, or honour, for God and for his glory, it is generous and more truly delightful to deny them for this reason, than to enjoy them. Men have done much this way for the love of their country, and by a principle of moral virtue; but to lose any delight, or to suffer any hardship for that highest end—the glory of God, and by the strength of love to him, is far more excellent, and truly pleasant.

2. The delights and pleasures of sin, religion indeed banishes, but it is to change them for this joy that is unspeakably beyond them. It calls men from sordid and base delights to those that are pure delights indeed: it calls to men, Drink ye no longer of the puddle, here are the crystal streams of a living fountain. There is a delight in the very despising of impure delights; as St. Augustine exclaims, *Quàm suave est istis suavitatibus carere! How pleasant is it to want these pleasures!* But for such a change, to have in their stead such delights, as that in comparison the other deserve not the name; to have such spiritual joy as shall end in eternal joy; it is a wonder we hasten not all to choose this joy, but it is indeed because we believe it not.

3. It is true, the godly are subject to great distresses and afflictions; but their joy is not extinguished by them, no, nor diminished neither, but often sensibly increased. When they have least of the world's joy, they abound most in spiritual

consolations, and then relish them best. They find them sweetest, when their taste is not depraved by earthly enjoyments. *We rejoice in tribulation*, says St. Paul: and here our Apostle insists on that, to verify the substance of this joy in the midst of the greatest afflictions.

4. Spiritual grief, which seems most opposite to this spiritual joy, excludeth it not, for there is a secret delight and sweetness in the tears of repentance, a balm in them that refreshes the soul; and even their saddest kind of mourning, *viz.*, the dark times of desertion, hath this in it, which is someway sweet, that those mournings after their beloved, who absents himself, are a mark of their love to him, and a true evidence of it. And then all these spiritual sorrows, of what nature soever, are turned into spiritual joy; that is the proper end of them; they have a natural tendency that way.

5. But the natural man still doubts of this joy we speak of; because he sees and hears so little of it from them who profess to have it, and seem to have the best right to it. If we consider the wretchedness of this life, and especially the abundance of sin that is in the world, what wonder though this their joy retire much inward, and appear little abroad, where all things are so contrary to it, and so far are capable of it, to whom it were pertinent to vent it? Again, we see here, it is *unspeakable;* it were a poor thing if he that hath it could tell it all out. *Pauperis est numerare pecus.* And when the soul hath most of it, then it remains most within itself, and is so inwardly taken up with it, that possibly it can then least of all express it. It is with joys, as they say of cares and griefs, *Leves loquunter ingentes stupent.* The deepest waters run stillest. *Res severa est verum gaudium*, says Seneca. True joy is a solid grave thing, dwells more in the heart than in the countenance: whereas on the contrary, base and false joys are but superficial, skin-deep (as we say); they are all in the face.

Think not that it is with the godly, as the Prophet says of the wicked, that *there is no peace* to them. The *Septuagint* reads it, *no joy;* certainly it is true; there is no true joy to

the wicked: they may revel and make a noise, but they rejoice not: *The laughter of the fool is as the crackling of thorns under the pot,* a great noise but little heat, and soon at an end. There is no continuing feast, but that of *a good conscience.* Wickedness and real joy cannot dwell together, as the very moralist Seneca hath it often and at large. But he that can say, The righteousness of Jesus Christ is mine, and in him the favour of God, and the hope of eternal happiness, hath such a light as can shine in the darkest dungeon, yea in the *dark valley of the shadow of death itself.*

Say not thou, If I betake myself to the way of godliness, I must bid farewell to gladness, never a merry day more; no, on the contrary, never a truly joyful day till then, yea, no days at all, but night to the soul, till it entertain Jesus Christ, and his kingdom, which consists in *righteousness, peace,* and *joy in the Holy Ghost.* Thou dost not sacrifice Isaac, which signifies laughter, (as St. Bernard has it,) but a ram; not your joy, but filthy sinful delights which end in sorrow.

Oh! seek to know in your experience what those joys mean; for all describing and commending them to you will not make you understand them; but *taste and see that the Lord is good: Lauda mellis dulcedinem quantum potes, qui non gustaverit, non intelliget,* says Augustine; *Praise the sweetness of honey to the utmost, he who has never tasted it, cannot understand it.* You cannot see and know this goodness, but by tasting it; and having tasted it, all those poor joys you thought sweet before, will then be bitter and distasteful to you.

And you that have Christ yours by believing, know your happiness, and rejoice, and glory in it. Whatsoever is your outward condition, *rejoice always, and again I say rejoice,* for *light is sown to the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.* (Phil. iv. 4. Psal. xcvii. 11.)

Ver. 10. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.

11. Searching what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

12. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, which things the Angels desire to look into.

It is the ignorance, or at least the inconsideration of Divine things, that makes earthly things, whether good or evil, appear great in our eyes; therefore the Apostle's great aim is, by representing the certainty and excellency of the belief and hope of Christians to his afflicted brethren, to strengthen their minds against all discouragements and oppositions; that they may account nothing too hard to do or suffer, for so high a cause, and so happy an end. It is the low and mean thoughts, and the shallow persuasion we have of things that are spiritual, that is the cause of all our remissness and coldness in them. The doctrine of salvation, mentioned in the former verse as the end of our Christian faith, is illustrated in these words, from its antiquity, dignity, and infallible truth.

It is no modern invention; for the prophets inquired after it, and foretold it in former ages from the beginning. Thus the prejudice of novelty is removed, which usually meets the most ancient truth in its new discoveries.

Again, it is no mean thing that such men as were of unquestioned eminency in wisdom and holiness, did so much study and search after, and having found it out, were careful not only to publish it in their own times, but to record it to posterity; and this not by the private motion of their own spirits, but by the acting and guidance of the Spirit of God; which likewise sets the truth of their testimony above all doubtfulness and uncertainty.

But taking the three verses entirely together, we have in them these three things, testifying how excellent the doctrine of the Gospel is. 1. We have the principal author of it. 2. The matter of it. 3. The worth of those who are exercised about it, *viz.*, the best of men, the prophets and apostles, in administering it, and the best of all the creatures, the angels, in admiring it.

I. The first author is the absolutely *first*, the Spirit of God in the prophets, ver. 11, in the apostles, ver. 12. But the Spirit of Christ, in ver. 11, is the same spirit that he sent down on his disciples after his ascending to glory, and which spoke in his prophets before his descending to the earth. It is the Spirit of Christ, proceeding jointly from him with the Father, as he is the Son of God, and dwelling most richly and fully in him as the Son of Man.

The Holy Ghost is in himself holiness, and the source and worker of holiness, and author of this holy doctrine which breathes nothing but holiness, and urges it most pressingly upon all that receive it.

This is the very life of divine faith, touching the mysteries of salvation, firmly to believe their *revelation* by the Spirit of God. This the word itself testifies, as we see; and it is really manifest in it; he carries the lively stamp of Divine inspiration, but there must be a spiritual eye to discern it. He that is blind, knows not that the sun shines at noon, but by the report of others; but they that see, are assured they see it, and assured by no other thing but its own light. To ask one who is a true believer, How know you the Scriptures to be Divine? is the same as to ask him, How know you light to be light?

The soul is nothing but darkness and blindness within, till that same Spirit that shines without in the word, shines likewise within it, and effectually make it light; but that once done, then is the word read with some measure of the same Spirit by which it was written, and the soul is ascertained that it is Divine; as in bodily sight, there must be a meeting of inward light, *viz.*, the visual spirits with the outward *object.*

The Spirit of God within, brings evidence with it, and makes itself discernible in the word; this all arguments, all books and study cannot attain unto. *It is given to believe*, 1 Phil. i. 29.

No man knows the things of a man but the spirit of man, 1 Cor. ii. 11. But how holds that here? For if a man speak out the things that are in his spirit, then others may know them; but the apostle's aim there, is, to conclude that the

things of God, even such as were revealed in his word, could not be known but by his own Spirit; so that though revealed, yet they remain still unrevealed, till the Spirit teach within, as well as without; because they are intelligible by none, but by those who are the private scholars and hearers of the Holy Ghost, the author of them; and because there are so few of these, therefore there is so little real believing amidst all the noise and profession that we make of it. Who is there (if you will believe them) that believes not? And yet truly there is too much cause to continue the Prophet's regret, Isaiah, liii. 1, *Who hath believed our report?*

Learn then to suspect yourselves, and to find out your own unbelief, that you may desire this Spirit to teach you inwardly those great mysteries which he outwardly reveals and teaches by his word. Make use of that promise, and press the Lord with it, *They shall be all taught of God,* Isaiah liv. 13, and John vi. 45.

But, II. There is here the *matter* of this doctrine, which we have in three several expressions, 1. That which is repeated from the foregoing verse; it is the *Doctrine of Salvation*, that is the end of it. 2. *The Doctrine of the sufferings and glory of Christ*, as the means. And 3. The *Doctrine of Grace*, the spring of both.

1. It is the doctrine of *Salvation*, the only true doctrine of true happiness, which the wisest of natural men have groped and sought after with much earnestness, but with no success; they had no other than the dark moonlight of nature, and that is not sufficient to find it out; only the Sun of Righteousness shining in the sphere of the Gospel, *brings life and immortality to light*, 2 Tim. i. 10. No wonder that natural wisdom, the deepest of it, is far from finding out the true method and way of cure, seeing it cannot discover the disease of miserable mankind, *viz.*, the sinful and wretched condition of nature by the first disobedience.

Salvation expresses not only that which is negative, but implies likewise positive and perfect happiness; thus forgiveness

of sins is put for the whole nature of Justification frequently in Scripture. It is more easy to say of this unspeakable happiness, what it is not, than what it is. There is in it a full and final freedom from all annoyance; all tears are wiped away, and their fountain is dried up; all feeling and fear, or danger, of any the least evil, either of sin or punishment, is banished for ever; there are no invasions of enemies, no robbing or destroying in all this holy mountain, no voice of complaining in the streets of the new Jerusalem. Here it is at the best but interchanges of mornings of joy, with sad evenings of weeping; but there, there shall be no light, no need of sun nor moon, *For the glory of the Lord shall lighten it, and the lamb shall be the light thereof*, Rev. xxi. 23.

Well may the Apostle (as he doth here throughout this chapter) lay this salvation to counterbalance all sorrows and persecutions, and whatsoever hardships can be in the way to it. The soul that is persuaded of this, in the midst of storms and tempests enjoys a calm, triumphs in disgraces, grows richer by all its losses, and by death itself attains this immortal life.

Happy are they who have their eye fixed upon this salvation, and are longing and waiting for it; who see so much of that brightness and glory, as darkens all the lustre of earthly things to them, and makes them trample upon those things which formerly they admired and doated on with the rest of the foolish world. Those things we account so much of, are but as rotten wood, or glow-worms that shine only in the night of our ignorance and vanity: so soon as the light-beam of this salvation enters into the soul, it cannot much esteem or affect any thing below it, and if those glances of it which shine in the word, and in the soul of a Christian, be so bright and powerful, what then shall the full sight and real possession of it be?

2. The Gospel is represented as the *Doctrine of the sufferings and glory of Christ, as the means of salvation.* The worker of this salvation, whom the Prophets and Apostles make the sum of all their doctrine, is Jesus Christ, and the sum of that work of redemption, (as we have it here,) is his humilia-

tion and exaltation; his sufferings, and the glory that followed thereupon. Now, though this serve as an encouragement to Christians in their sufferings, that this is the way by which their Lord went into his glory, and is true also of Christ mystical, the head with the members, as the Scriptures often teach us; yet I conceive it is here mainly intended as a summary of the work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, relating to the salvation mentioned, ver. 10, and as the cause for the effect, so it is put for it here. The prophets inquired and prophesied of that salvation. How? By searching out and foretelling the sufferings and glory of Christ. His sufferings, then, and his after-glories are our salvation. His suffering is the purchase of our salvation, and his glory is our assurance of it; he as our head having triumphed, and being crowned, makes us likewise sure of victory and triumph. His having entered on the possession of glory, makes our hope certain. This is his prayer, *That where he is, there we may be also,* and this his own assertion, *The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them,* John xvii. 22, 24. This is his promise, *Because I live, ye shall live also,* John xiv. 19. Christ and the believer are one; this is that great mystery the Apostle speaks of, Ephes. v. 30. Though it is a common known truth, the words and outside of it obvious to all, yet none can understand it but they who indeed partake of it. By virtue of that union their sins were accounted his, and Christ's sufferings are accounted theirs, and by consequence, his glory, the consequent of his sufferings, is likewise theirs. There is an indissoluble connexion betwixt the life of Christ and of a believer. *Our life is hid with Christ in God;* and therefore while we remain there, our life is there, though hid, *and when he who is our life shall appear, we likewise shall appear with him in glory,* Coloss. iii. 3, 4. Seeing the sufferings and glory of our Redeemer are the main subject of the Gospel, and the causes of our salvation, and of our comfortable persuasion of it, it is a wonder that they are not more the matter of our thoughts. Ought we not daily to consider the bitterness of that cup of wrath he drank for us, and be wrought

to repentance and hatred of sin, to have sin embittered to us by that consideration, and find the sweetness of his love in that he did drink it, and by that be deeply possessed with love to him? These things we now and then speak of, but they sink not into our minds, as our Saviour exhorts, where he is speaking of those same sufferings. O! that they were engraven on our hearts, and that sin were crucified in us, and *the world crucified to us, and we unto the world*, by the cross of Christ! (Gal. vi. 14.)

And let us be frequently considering the glory wherein he is, and have our eye often upon that, and our hearts solacing and refreshing themselves frequently with the thoughts of that place and condition wherein Christ is, and where our hopes are, ere long, to behold him; both to see his glory, and to be glorified with him, is it not reason? Yea, it is necessary, it cannot be otherwise, if our treasure and Head be there, that our hearts be there likewise, (Matt. vi. 21; Coloss. iii. 1, 2.)

The third expression here of the Gospel, is, That *it is the Doctrine of Grace.* The work of redemption itself, and the several parts of it, and the doctrine revealing it, have all the name of Grace; because they all flow from Free Grace; that is their spring and first cause.

And it is this wherein the doctrine of salvation is mainly comfortable, that it is free; *Ye are saved by grace*, (Eph. ii. 8.) It is true, God requires faith, it is *through faith;* but he that requires that, gives it too: *That is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*, (Eph. ii. 8.) It is wonderful grace to save upon believing: believe in Jesus for salvation, and live accordingly, and it is done; there is no more required to thy pardon, but that thou receive it by faith. But truly nature cannot do this; it is as impossible for us of ourselves to believe as to do. This then is that which makes it all grace from beginning to end, that God not only saves upon believing, but gives believing itself. Christ is called not only the *Author and Finisher* of our salvation, but even *of our faith*, (Heb. xii. 2.)

Free grace being rightly apprehended, is that which stays the heart in all estates, and keeps it from fainting, even in its saddest times. What though there is nothing in myself but matter of sorrow and discomfort, it cannot be otherwise: it is not from myself that I look for comfort at any time, but from my God and his free grace. Here is comfort enough for all times: when I am at the best, I ought not, I dare not, rely upon myself; when I am at the worst, I may, and should rely upon Christ, and his sufficient grace. Though I be the vilest sinner that ever came to him, yet I know he is more gracious than I am sinful; yea, the more my sin is, the more glory will it be to his grace to pardon it; it will appear the richer. Doth not David argue thus, (Psal. xxv. 11,) *For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.* But it is an empty, fruitless notion of grace, to consider it only in the general, and in a wandering way: we are to look upon it particularly, as addressed to us; and it is not enough that it comes to us, in the message of him that brings it only to our ear, but, that we may know what it is, it must come into us; then it is ours indeed. But if it come to us in the message only, and we send it away again, if it shall so depart, we had better never have heard of it: it will leave a guiltiness behind it, that shall make all our sins weigh much heavier than before.

Inquire whether you have entertained this grace or not; whether it be come to you, and into you, or not; whether the *kingdom of God is within you,* as our Saviour speaks, (Luke xvii. 21.) It is the most woful condition that can be, not to be far from the kingdom of God, and yet to fall short, and miss of it. The grace of God revealed in the Gospel, is entreating you daily to receive it, is willing to become yours, if you reject it not. Were your eyes open to behold the beauty and excellency of this grace, there would need no deliberation; yea, you would endure none. Desire your eyes to be opened and enlightened from above, that you may know it, and your hearts opened, that you may be happy by receiving it.

The Apostle, speaking of Jesus Christ as the foundation of

our faith, calls him *The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.* (Heb. xiii. 8.) *Yesterday*, under the Law, *to-day*, in those primitive times, nearest his incarnation, and *for ever*, in all succeeding ages. And the resemblance holds good between the two cherubim over the mercy-seat, and the two testaments: *those* had their faces toward one another, and both toward the mercy-seat; and *these* look to one another in their doctrine, agreeing perfectly, and both look to Christ, the true mercy-seat, and the great subject of the Scriptures. Thus we see here: the things which the Prophets foretold as to come, and the Apostles reported were accomplished, were the same, and from the same Spirit; they were the *sufferings of Christ*, and *his after-glory*, and in them our salvation by free grace. The prophecies look forward to the times of the Gospel; and the things then fulfilled, look back to the prophecies; and each confirms the other, meeting all in Christ, who is their truth and centre.

We have spoken already of the Author, and Subject of this salvation. Now we come to say something. III. Concerning the worth of those who are employed about it, as well in administering to it, as in admiring it. And these are, the Prophets and the Apostles: the first foretold what was to come, the second preached them when they came to pass.

In the Prophets, there are three things here remarked. 1. Their diligence. 2. The success of it. 3. The extent of its usefulness.

1. This their diligence disparages not their extraordinary visions and revelations, and that which is added, that the Spirit of Christ was in them, and did foretel the things to come.

It was their constant duty, and they being sensible of their duty, made it their constant exercise, to search into Divine mysteries by meditation and prayer; yea, and by reading such holy writers as were already extant in their times, as Daniel ix. 3; x. 11. For which cause, some, taking the word actively, conceive Daniel to be called there a *man of desires*,

because of his great desire, and diligent search after the knowledge of those high things. And in this diligent way they constantly waited for those revelations which sometimes when it seemed good unto the Spirit of God, were imparted unto them.

" Prophecy resideth not (say the Hebrew doctors) but in a " man who is great in wisdom and virtue, whose affections " overcome him not in any worldly things, but by his know- " ledge he overcometh his affections continually; on such a " man the Holy Spirit cometh down, and his soul is associated " to the angels, and he is changed to another man." Thus Maimonides.

It was the way of the prince of darkness amongst the idolatrous Gentiles, to speak either through senseless statues, or where he uttered his oracles by such profane prophets as he had, to cause them in a fury to mumble forth words which they understood not, and knew not what they said. But the Spirit of God being *Light*, and the holy prophets inspired with it, they being diligent attendants on its motions, and searchers of the mysteries of salvation, understood well what their business was, and to what purpose those things of the kingdom of Christ tended, which they by inspiration did foretel; and therefore bended their thoughts this way, praying, and searching, and waiting for answers, studying to keep the passage, as it were open, for the beams of those divine revelations to come in at; not to have their spirits clogged and stopped with earthly and sinful affections, endeavouring for that calm and quiet composure of spirit, in which the voice of God's spirit might be the better heard. See Psal. lxxx. 8, and Hab. ii. 1; in both which places follows an excellent prophecy concerning Christ and that salvation which he wrought for his people.

Were the prophets not exempted from the pains of search and inquiry, who had the Spirit of God not only in a high measure, but after a singular manner? How unbeseeming, then, are slothfulness and idleness in us! Whether is it that

we judge ourselves advantaged with more of the Spirit than those holy men, or that we esteem the doctrine and mysteries of salvation, on which they bestowed so much of their labour, unworthy of ours? These are both so gross, that we shall be loth to own either of them; and yet, our laziness and negligence in searching after these things, seems to charge us with some such thought as one of those.

You will say, This concerns those who succeed to the work of the Prophets and Apostles in ordinary,—the ministers of the Gospel. And it doth indeed fall first upon them. It is their task indeed to be diligent, and, as the Apostle exhorts his Timothy, *to attend on reading*, (1 Tim. iv. 13); but, above all, to study to have much experimental knowledge of God, and his son Jesus Christ, and for this end, to disentangle and free themselves, as much as is possible, from lower things, in order to the search of heavenly mysteries. (Prov. xviii. 1.) As they are called *angels*, so ought they to be, as much as they can attain to it, in a constant nearness unto God, and attendance on him, like unto the angels, and to look much into these things as the angels here are said to do; to endeavour to have their souls purified from the affections of sin, that the light of Divine truth may shine clear in them, and not be fogged, and misted with filthy vapours; to have the impressions of God clearly written in their breasts, not mixed and blurred with earthly characters; seasoning all their readings and common studies with much prayer and divine meditation. They who converse most with the king, and are inward with him, know most of the affairs of state, and even the secrets of them, which are hid from others: and certainly those of God's messengers who are oftenest with himself, cannot but understand their business best, and know most of his meaning, and the affairs of his kingdom; and to that end it is confessed, that singular diligence is required in them. But seeing the Lord hath said without exception, that *His secret is with them that fear him*, (Psal. xxv. 14,) and that he will reveal Himself and his saving truths to those that humbly seek them; do not any of you to

yourselves so much injury, as to debar yourselves from sharing in your measure of the search of these same things, which were the study of the prophets, and which by their study and publishing them, are made the more accessible and easy to us. Consider that they do concern us universally, if we would be saved; for it is salvation here that they studied. *Search the Scriptures*, says our Saviour, (John v. 39,) and that is the motive, if there can be any that may be thought in reason pressing enough, or if we do indeed think so, *For in them ye think to have eternal life.* And it is there to be found: Christ is this *salvation* and this *eternal life.* And he adds further, *It is they* (these Scriptures) *that testify of me.* These are the golden mines in which alone the abiding treasures of eternity are to be found, and therefore worthy all the digging and pains we can bestow on them.

Besides their *industry* in this inquiry and *search*, there are here expressed their ardent affection to the thing they prophesied of, and their longings and wishes for its accomplishment, *viz.*, the coming of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, the top of all their desires, the great Hope and the Light of Israel. No wonder they *desired his day*, who had so much joy in the seeing it so far off, as over the head almost of two thousand years. Faith overlooking them, and foreseeing it so in Abraham, his heart danced for joy. (John viii. 56.) *Abraham saw my day and rejoiced.*

And this is conceived to be the meaning of those expressions in that mystical song, as they suit those times of the Jewish Church, breathing out her longings for the coming of her beloved. His speaking by the prophets was his voice as afar off; but his incarnation was his coming near, and kissing his Church *with the kisses of his mouth.* (Cant. i. 1.) And to omit other expressions throughout the song, the last chapter, ver. 1, is tender and pathetical, *O! that thou wert as my brother*, &c.; and the last words of it, *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.* And when this salvation came in the fulness of time, we see how

joyfully good old Simeon embraces it, and thought he had seen enough, and therefore upon the sight desired to have his eyes closed: *Now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* (Luke ii. 29.) Therefore our Saviour says to his Apostles, (Matt. xiii. 16,) *Blessed are your eyes for they see, for many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them.* This is He, whom we disesteem and make so small account of, being now so clearly revealed, whom they studied and sought, and wished so much for, so many ages before.

2dly. The *success* of their search is remarked; in seeking they found the certainty, and the time of his coming; they sought out till they found, and then they prophesied of that salvation and grace; *they searched what*, and *what manner of time*, and the Spirit did manifestly foretel it them.

They sought to know *what manner of time* it should come to pass, *viz.*, in a time of great distress, and bad estate of the people, as all the prophets testify; and particularly that place, (Gen. xlix. 10,) gives an express character of the time; though there be some diversity of exposition of the particular words, yet the main sense is agreed on by all sound interpreters, and the Chaldee paraphrase hath it expressly, that that Shiloh is the Messiah.

And of his sufferings and after-glories they prophesied very clearly, as Psal. xxii., Isa. liii., &c. And our Saviour himself makes use of their testimony in both these points, (Luke xxiv. 25—27.)

3dly. There is the benefit of their search and finding, in the *extent* of it, (verse 12,) to the believers in the Apostles' times, and to the succeeding Christian Church, and so to us in these days; but in some peculiar sense the Prophets ministered to the people of those times wherein Christ did suffer and enter into glory, inasmuch as they were the first who enjoyed the accomplishment of those prophecies, they being fulfilled in their own days.

The Prophets knew well that the things they prophesied

were not to be fulfilled in their own times, and therefore in their prophesying concerning them, though both themselves and the people of God who were contemporary with them did reap the comfort of that doctrine, and were by faith partakers of the same salvation, and so it was to themselves as well as of us, yet in regard of the accomplishment, they knew it was not to themselves, it was not to be brought to pass in their days; and therefore, speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, they often foretel it for *the latter days*, as their phrase is. And as we have the things they prophesied of, so we have this peculiar benefit of their prophecies, that their suiting so perfectly with the event and performance, serves much to confirm our Christian faith.

There is a foolish and miserable way of verifying this expression,—men ministering the doctrine of salvation to others and *not to themselves*; carrying it all in their heads and tongues, and none of it in their hearts; not hearing it even while they preach it; extending the bread of life to others, and eating none of it themselves. And this the Apostle says that he was most careful to avoid, and therefore dealt severely with his body, that it might not in this way endanger his soul. *I beat down my body*, says he, *and keep it in subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away*, (1 Cor. ix. 27). It is not in this sense that the prophets ministered to others, and not to themselves. No, they had joy and comfort in the very hopes of the Redeemer to come, and in the belief of the things which any others had spoken, and which themselves spake concerning him. And thus the true preachers of the Gospel, though their ministerial gifts are for the use of others, yet that salvation which they preach, they lay hold on and partake of themselves; as your boxes, wherein perfumes are kept for garments and other uses, are themselves perfumed by keeping them.

We see how the Prophets ministered it as the never-failing consolation of the Church in those days, in all their distresses. It is wonderful when they are foretelling either the sorrows

and afflictions, or the temporal restoration and deliverances of that people of the Jews, what sudden outleaps they will make, to speak of the kingdom of Jesus Christ and the days of the Gospel, insomuch that he who considers not the spirit they were moved by, would think it were incoherence and impertinency: but they knew well what they meant, that *those news* were never unseasonable, nor beside the purpose, that the sweetness of those thoughts, *viz.*, the consideration of the Messiah, was able (to such as believed) to allay the bitterest distresses, and that the great deliverance He was to work, was the top and sum of all deliverances. Thus their prophecies of Him were present comfort to themselves and other believers, then: and further, were to serve for a clear evidence of the Divine truth of those mysteries in the days of the Gospel, in and after their fulfilment.

This sweet stream of their doctrine did, as the rivers, make its own banks fertile and pleasant as it ran by, and flowed still forward to after ages, and by the confluence of more such prophecies, grew greater as it went, till it fell in with the main current of the Gospel in the New Testament, both acted and preached by the Great Prophet himself whom they foretold as *to come*, and recorded by his apostles and evangelists, and thus united into one river clear as crystal. This doctrine of salvation in the Scriptures, hath still refreshed the city of God, his church under the Gospel, and still shall do so, till it empty itself into the ocean of eternity.

The first discovery we have of this stream nearest its source, the eternal purpose of Divine mercy, is in that promise which the Lord himself preached in few words to our first parents, who had newly made themselves and their race miserable: *The seed of the woman shall break the head of the serpent*, (Gen. iii. 15).

The agreement of the predictions of the Prophets with the things themselves, and the preaching of the Apostles following, (the other kind of men employed in this salvation,) make up one organ, or great instrument, turned by the same hand, and

sounding by the same breath of the spirit of God: and that is expressed here, as the common authority of the doctrine in both, and the cause of their harmony and agreement in it.

All these extraordinary *gifts of the Holy Ghost*, the calling *of prophets and apostles and evangelists*, and the ordinary ministry of the Gospel by *pastors and teachers*, tend to that great design which God hath in *building his church*, in making up that great assembly of all the elect, to enjoy and praise him for all eternity, (Eph. iv. 11). For this end he sent his Son out of his bosom, and for this end he sends forth his messengers to divulge that salvation which his Son hath wrought, and sends down his Spirit upon them, that they may be fitted for so high a service. Those cherubim wonder how guilty man escapes their flaming swords, and re-enters paradise. The angels see that their companions who fell are not restored, but behold their room filled up with the spirits of just men, and they envy it not: *Which mystery the angels desire to look into;* and this is added in the close of these words for the extolling of it.

The angels look upon what they have seen already fulfilled, with delight and admiration, and what remains, namely, the full accomplishment of this great work in the end of time, they look upon with desire to see it finished; it is not a slight glance they take of it, but they fix their eyes and looks steadfastly on it, *viz.*, that mystery of godliness, *God manifested in the flesh;* and it is added, *seen of angels*, (1 Tim. iii. 16).

The Word made flesh, draws the eyes of those glorious spirits, and possesses them with wonder to see the Almighty Godhead joined with the weakness of a man, yea of an infant. He that stretcheth forth the heavens bound up in swaddling clothes! and to surpass all the wonders of his life, this is beyond all admiration, that the Lord of life was subject to death, and that his love to rebellious mankind, moved him both to take on and lay down that life.

It is no wonder the angels admire these things, and delight to look upon them; but it is strange that we do not so. They view them steadfastly, and we neglect them: either we consider

them not at all, or give them but a transient look, half an eye. That which was the great business of the Prophets and Apostles, both for their own times, and to convey them to us, we regard not; and turn our eyes to foolish wandering thoughts, which angels are ashamed at. They are not so concerned in this great mystery as we are; they are but mere beholders, in comparison of us, yea, they seem rather to be losers some way, in that our nature, in itself inferior to theirs, is in Jesus Christ exalted above theirs, (Heb. ii. 16). We bow down to the earth, and study, and grovel in it, rake into the very bowels of it, and content ourselves with the outside of *the unsearchable riches of Christ*, and look not within it: but they, having no will nor desire but for the glory of God, being pure flames of fire burning only in love to him, are no less delighted than amazed with the bottomless wonders of his wisdom and goodness shining in the work of our redemption.

It is our shame and our folly, that we lose ourselves and our thoughts in poor childish things, and trifle away our days we know not how, and let these rich mysteries lie unregarded. They look up, upon the Deity in itself with continual admiration; but then they look down to this mystery as another wonder. We give them an ear in public, and in a cold formal way stop conscience's mouth with some religious performances in private, and no more; but to have deep and frequent thoughts, and to be ravished in the meditation of our Lord Jesus, once on the cross, and now in glory,—how few of us are acquainted with this!

We see here excellent company, and examples not only of the best of men that have been,—we have them for fellow-servants and fellow-students,—but, if that can persuade us, we may all study the same lesson with the very angels, and have the same thoughts with them. This the soul doth, which often entertains itself with the delightful admiration of Jesus Christ and the redemption he hath wrought for us.

Ver. 13. Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The great error of man's mind, and the cause of all his errors of life, is the diverting of the soul from God, and turning downward to inferior confidences and comforts; and this mischoice is the very root of all our miseries; therefore the main end of the holy word of God, is to untie the hearts of men from the world, and reduce them to God, as their only rest and solid comfort; and this is here the Apostle's mark at which all the preceding discourse aims: it all meets and terminates in this exhortation, *Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind.*

In the words are these *three* things, 1*st*, The great stay and comfort of the soul, which the Apostle repeats, and represents to his afflicted brethren. 2*dly*, His exciting them to the right apprehension and confident expectation of it. 3*dly*, The inference of that exhortation.

I. The great matter of their comfort is, *The grace which is to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* Some for *grace* read *joy*, having, as it seems, for χάριν read χαρὰν; the words are not more near one to another, than the things they signify, *grace* and *joy;* but it is most commonly thus read.

The estate of grace and that of glory, are not only so inseparably connected, but so like one to the other; yea, so essentially the same, that the same expressions in Scripture do often fit both of them; and so fit them, that it is doubtful for which of the two to understand them: but the hazard is not great, seeing they are so near, and so one, grace being glory begun, and glory grace completed, and both are often called *the kingdom of God.* So the *grace* here said to be *brought to them,* is either the *Doctrine of grace* in the Gospel, wherein Jesus Christ is revealed, and that grace in him; (for the whole tenor of the covenant of grace, every clause of it, holds in him; His precious name runs through it all;) or, it is the *Grace of*

salvation which is to be fully perfected at the last and clearest revelation of Jesus Christ. And for this rather I take it here, inasmuch as the Apostle's nearest foregoing words were concerning it, and it is set up here as the object of hope, which, though often put for faith, yet, in its proper notion, looks out to that which is to come.

This is the last act of grace, and yet still it is called by its own name, and not turned into the name of merit, notwithstanding all the obedience and all the sufferings of the saints that have gone before it; yea, *even the salvation to be revealed* to them, is called Grace. But it is needless to insist on this, for certainly none who partake of grace, will be of another mind, or ever admit the mixture of the least notion of self-deserving.

Though much dispute hath been bestowed on this, and questions have been multiplying in the disputant's hands, (as is usual in controversies,) one growing out of another, yet truly I think the debate in this matter to be but waste; it is not only against the voice of the Scriptures, and of grace itself in the soul, but even against sound reason, to imagine any meriting, properly taken, in any mere creature at his Creator's hand, who hath given him his being: of which gift all his services and obedience fall short, so that he can never come to be upon even disengaged terms, much less to oblige anew, and deserve somewhat further. Besides, that same grace by which any one serves and obeys God, is likewise his own gift, as it is said, (1 Chron. xxix. 14,) *All things come of thee, and of thine own have I given thee.* Both the ability and the will of giving to him, are from him; so that in these respects, not angels, nor man in innocency, could properly merit at the hands of God, much less man lost, redeemed again, and so coming under the new obligation of infinite mercy. And this is so evident a truth, that the most learned and most ingenious jesuits and schoolmen have in divers passages of their writings acknowledged it, that there cannot be any compensation, and much less merit from the creature to God, but only in relation

to his own free purpose, and the tenor of his word and covenant, which is inviolable, because he is unchangeable, and truth itself.

His first grace he gives freely, and no less freely the increases of it, and with the same gracious hand sets the crown of glory upon all the grace that he hath given before. It is but the following forth of his own work, and fulfilling his own thoughts of free love, which love hath no cause but in himself, and finds none worthy, but gives them all the worthiness they have, and accepts of their love, not as worthy in itself to be accepted, but because he himself hath wrought it in them. Not only the first tastes, but the full draught of the waters of life is freely given; (Rev. xxii. 17;) nothing is brought with them but *thirst*.

That is to be brought.] Not *that is brought*, or, *that shall be brought*, but, if we will render it strictly, it is, *that is a bringing to you*. That blessedness, that consummation of grace the saints are hastening forward to, walking on in their way wheresoever it lies indifferently, *through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report*, (2 Cor. vi. 8). And as they are hastening to it, it is hastening to them in the course of time; every day brings it nearer to them than before; and notwithstanding all difficulties and dangers in the way, they who have their eye and hopes upon it, shall arrive at it, and it shall be brought safe to their hand; all the malice of men and devils shall not be able to cut them short of this grace that is a bringing to them against the day of the *revelation of Jesus Christ*.

At the revelation of Jesus Christ.] This is repeated from the 7th verse. And it is termed *a day of revelation, a revelation of the just judgment of God*, (Rom. ii. 5). And thus it would be to all, were it not that it is withal the *revelation of Jesus Christ;* therefore is it a day of grace, all light and blessedness to them who are in him, because they shall appear in him, and if he be glorious, they shall not be inglorious and ashamed. Indeed were our secret sins then to be set

before our own eyes, in their most affrighted visage, and to be set open to the view of angels and men, and to the eye of Divine justice, and we left alone so revealed, who is there that could gather any comfort, and would not rather have their thoughts filled with horror at the remembrance and expectation of that day? And thus indeed all unbelieving and ungodly men may look upon it, and find it terrible; but to those who are shadowed under the robe of righteous Jesus, yea, who are made one with him, and shall partake of his glory in his appearing, it is the sweetest, the most comfortable thought that their souls can be entertained and possessed withal, to remember this glorious revelation of their Redeemer.

It is their great grief here, not that themselves are hated and vilified, but that their Lord Jesus is so little known, and therefore so much despised in the world. He is vailed and hid from the world. Many nations acknowledge him not at all; and many of those that do in word confess, yet in deed deny him. Many that have a form of godliness, do not only want, but mock and scoff at the power of it; and to such Christ is not known, his excellencies are hid from their eyes. Now this glory of their Lord being precious to them that love him, they rejoice much in the consideration of this, that there is a day at hand, wherein he shall appear in his brightness and full of glory to all nations, and all shall be forced to acknowledge him; it shall be without doubt and unquestioned to all, that he is *the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Judge of the World.*

And as it is the day of His revelation, it is also the revelation of all the adopted sons of God in him. (See Rom. viii. 9.) They are now accounted the refuse of the world, exposed to all kinds of contempt; but then the beams of Christ's glory shall beautify them, and they shall be known for his. See 1 John iii. 2; Col. iii. 4.

Next, there is, II. The exhortation, by which the Apostle excites them to the right apprehension and confident expectation of this grace—*Hope to the end.* The difference of these two

graces, *faith* and *hope*, is so small, that the one is often taken for the other in Scripture; it is but a different aspect of the same confidence, *faith* apprehending the infallible truth of those Divine promises of which *hope* doth assuredly expect the accomplishment, and that is their truth; so that this immediately results from the other. This is the anchor fixed within the vail, which keeps the soul firm against all the tossings on these swelling seas, and the winds and tempests that arise upon them. The firmest thing in this inferior world, is, a believing soul.

Faith establishes the heart on Jesus Christ, and hope lifts it up, being on that rock, over the head of all intervenient dangers, crosses, and temptations, and sees the glory and happiness that follow after them.

To the end.] Or perfectly: and therefore the Christian seeks most earnestly, and yet waits most patiently. (Psal. cxxx. 6.) Indeed this hope is perfect in continuance, it is a *hope unto the end*, because it is perfect in its nature, although imperfect in degree. Sometimes doubtings are intermixed with it in the souls of Christians, yet *this is their infirmity*, as the Psalmist speaks, (Psal. lxxvii. 10,) not the infirmity and insufficiency of the object of their hope. Worldly hopes are in their own nature imperfect; they do imply in their very being, doubtfulness and wavering, because the things whereon they are built, are inconstant and uncertain, and full of deceit and disappointments. How can that hope be immoveable, which is built upon moving sands or quagmire? That which is itself unfixed, cannot give stability to any other thing resting upon it; but because the truth and goodness of the immutable God are the foundation of spiritual hope, therefore it is assured, and *like Mount Zion that cannot be removed:* (Psal. cxxv. 1:) and this is its perfection.

Now the Apostle exhorts his brethren to endeavour to have their hearts possessed with as high a measure and degree of this hope as may be; seeing in itself it is so perfect and firm, so assured an hope, he would have them aspire to all the assurance and perfection of it they can attain.

This exercise of hope, as I conceive, is not only to have the habit of it strong in the soul, but to act it often, to be often turning that way, to view that approaching day of liberty: *Lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh.* (Luke xxi. 28.) Where this hope is often acted, it will grow strong, as all habits do, and where it is strong, it will work much, and delight to act often, and will control both the doubtings and the other many impertinent thoughts of the mind, and force them to yield the place to it. Certainly, they who long much for that coming of Christ, will often look up to it. We are usually hoping after other things, which do but offer themselves to draw us after them, and to scorn us. What are the breasts of most of us, but so many nests of foolish hopes and fears intermixed, which entertain us day and night, and steal away our precious hours from us, that might be laid out so gainfully upon the wise and sweet thoughts of eternity, and upon the blessed and assured hope of the coming of our beloved Saviour!

The other words of exhortation here used, are subservient to this end, that this hope may be the more perfect and firm; a similar exhortation is much after the same manner joined by our Saviour (Luke xii. 35) with the expectance and waiting for his coming; and in this posture the Israelites, eating the passover, were expecting their deliverance; so we our full and final freedom.

If you would have much of this, call off your affections from other things, that they may be capable of much of it. The same eye cannot both look up to Heaven and down to earth at the same time. The more your affections are trussed up, and disentangled from the world, the more expedite and active will they be in this hope: the more sober they are, the less will they fill themselves with the coarse delights of earth, the more room will there be in them, and the more they shall be filled with this hope. It is great folly in our spiritual warfare, to charge ourselves superfluously. The fulness of one thing, hinders the receiving and admittance of any other, especially of

things so opposite as these fulnesses are. *Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Holy Ghost,* saith the Apostle, (Ephes. v. 18.) *That* is a brutish fulness, which makes a man no man; *this* Divine fulness makes him more than a man; it were happy to be so filled with this, as that it might be called a kind of drunkenness, as it was with the Apostles. (Acts ii.)

Be sober.] Or *watch.* The word signifies both, and with good reason; for you know the unsober cannot watch. Now though one main part of sobriety, and that which more properly and particularly bears this name, *viz., temperance* in meat and drink, is here intended; and though against the opposite to this, not only the purity and spirituality of religion, but even moral virtue inveighs as its special enemy, yea nature itself; and they that only naturally consider the body and its interest of life and health, find reason enough to cry down this base intemperance, which is so hateful by its own deformity, and withal carries its punishment along with it; although (I say) this sobriety is indeed most necessary for the preservation of grace and of the spiritual temper of the soul, and is here intended, yet I conceive, it is not all that is here meant; the word is more general, comprehending the moderate and sober use of all things worldly. As the Apostle says, *Gird up the loins of your mind,* so it is to be understood, let your *minds* be sober, all your affections inwardly attempered to your spiritual condition, not glutting yourselves with fleshy and perishing delights of any kind; for the more you take in of these, the less you shall have of spiritual comfort and of this perfect hope. They that pour out themselves upon present delights, look not like strangers here, and hopeful expectants of another life and better pleasures.

And certainly, the Captain of our salvation will not own them for his followers, who lie down to drink of these waters, but only such as in passing take of them with their hand. As excessive eating or drinking both makes the body sickly and lazy, fit for nothing but sleep, and besots the mind, as it cloys

up with filthy crudities the way through which the spirit should pass, bemiring them, and making them move heavily, as a coach in a deep way; thus doth all immoderate use of the world and its delights, wrong the soul in its spiritual condition, makes it sickly and feeble, full of spiritual distempers and inactivity, benumbs the graces of the Spirit, and fills the soul with sleepy vapours, makes it grow secure and heavy in spiritual exercises, and obstructs the way and motion of the Spirit of God in the soul. Therefore, if you would be spiritual, healthful, and vigorous, and enjoy much of the consolations of Heaven, be sparing and sober in those of the earth, and what you abate of the one, shall be certainly made up in the other. Health, with a good constitution of body, is more a constant permanent pleasure, than that of excess, and a momentary pleasing of the palate: thus, the comfort of this hope, is a more refined and more abiding contentment, than any that is to be found in the passing enjoyments of this world; and it is a foolish bargain to exchange a drachm of the one for many pounds of the other. Consider how pressingly the Apostle St. Paul reasons, (1 Cor. ix. 25,) *And every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things.* And take withal our Saviour's exhortation: *Be sober and watch, for ye know not at what hour your Lord will come.* (Matt. xxv. 13.)

The double-minded man (says St. James) *is unstable in all his ways*, (Jam. i. 8). Although the word usually signifies deceitfulness and dissimulation of mind,—answering to the Hebrew phrase, *a heart and a heart*,—yet here I conceive it hath another sense, agreeable to the Apostle's present discourse and scope; it implies doubtfulness and unsettled wavering of mind.

It is impossible that the course of life can be any other than uneven and incomposed, if the spring of it, *the heart*, whence *are the issues of life*, be so. A man that is not agreed within, not of one mind with himself, although there were nothing to trouble or alter him from without, that inward commotion is a sufficient principle and cause of inconstancy. How much

more then must he waver, when he is assaulted, and beat upon by outward oppositions! He is *like the waves of the sea*, of himself ever fluctuating to and fro, according to the natural instability of that element, and at the same time exposed to the tossings of all the waves that arise.

It is, therefore, in religion a main thing, to have the heart established and fixed in the belief and hope of the great things we look for: this will beget strength of resolution, and constancy in action, and in suffering too. And this is here our Apostle's great intent, to ballast the souls of his brethren with this firm belief, that they might sail even and steady in those seas of trouble. Wherefore, (says he,) if these things we have spoken be thus, if there is indeed truth in them, and you believe it to be so, what remains then, but to resolve for it upon any terms, to fit out for the journey, whatsoever be the difficulties, and amid them all to keep up the soul by that certain hope that will not disappoint us?

What he hath said before, is, as it were, shewing them some fruits, some clusters of grapes, of that promised land; and this exhortation is answerable to Caleb's words, (Numb. xiii. 30,) *Seeing it so good a land, let us go up and possess it.* Though there be fleshly objects, *sons of Anak*, giants of temptations, and afflictions, and sins to be overcome, ere it be ours, yet it is well worth all our labour, and our God hath ascertained us of the victory, and given us by his own word, undoubted hope of possessing it.

That which he principally exhorts unto in this verse, is, the right placing and firm continuing of our hope. When we consider how much of our life is taken up this way, in hoping for things we have not, and that even they who have most of what others are desiring and pursuing, are still hoping for somewhat further, that when men have attained one thing, though it be something they promised themselves to rest contented withal, yet presently upon obtaining it, hope begins to find out some new matter for itself; I say, considering the incessant working of this passion throughout our life, it is of

very much concernment for us to give it a right object, and not still to be living in vanity and uncertainty. Here is, then, that for our hope to apply itself to, after which it needs not change, nor can change without the greatest loss. *Hope for the grace that is coming at the revelation of Jesus Christ;* bestow all your hope on this, and recall it not. *Hope perfectly, and to the end.*

The other part of the exhortation relates to this as the main end, and in the original runs in this form: *Wherefore, girding up the loins of your mind, being sober, hope.* And to the end that hope may be the more perfect and endure to the end, and be more like itself, *i. e.* heavenly, your minds must be freed from the earth, that they may set for Heaven. And this is expressed in two several words, but both meaning much the same thing: that temper of *sobriety*, and that posture of being *girt*, are no other than the same removal of earthly-mindedness and incumbering cares and desires of earthly things.

Gird up the loins.] The custom of those countries was, that wearing long garments, they trussed them up for work or a journey. Chastity is indeed a Christian grace, and a great part of the soul's freedom and spiritualness, and fits it much for Divine things, yet I think it is not so particularly and entirely intended in this expression, as St. Jerome and others take it; for though the girding of the loins seemed to them to favour that sense, it is only an allusion to the manner of girding up which was then used; and besides, the Apostle here makes it clear that he meant somewhat else; for he says, *The loins of your minds.* Gather up your affections that they hang not down to hinder you in your race, and so, in your hopes of obtaining; and do not only gather them up, but tie them up, that they fall not down again, or if they do, be sure to gird them straiter than before. Thus be still as men prepared for a journey, tending to another place. This is not our home, nor the place of our rest: therefore our loins must be still girt up, our affections kept from training and dragging down upon the earth.

Men who are altogether earthly and profane, are so far from girding up the loins of their mind, that they set them wholly downwards. The very highest part of their soul is glued to the earth, and they are daily partakers of the serpent's curse, they go on their belly and eat the dust: *they mind earthly things.* (Phil. iii. 19.) Now this disposition is inconsistent with grace; but they that are in some measure truly godly, though they grovel not so, yet may be somewhat guilty of suffering their affections to fall too low, that is, to be too much conversant with vanity, and further engaged than is meet, to some things that are worldly; and by this means they may abate of their heavenly hopes, and render them less perfect, less clear and sensible to their souls.

And because they are most subject to take this liberty in the fair and calm weather of prosperity, God doth often wisely and mercifully cause rough blasts of affliction to arise upon them, to make them gather their loose garments nearer to them, and gird them closer.

Let us then remember our way, and where we are, and keep our garments girt up, for we walk amidst thorns and briers which, if we let them down, will entangle and stop us, and possibly tear our garments. We walk through a world where there is much mire of sinful pollutions, and therefore it cannot but defile them: and the crowd we are among, will be ready to tread on them, yea, our own feet may be entangled in them, and so make us stumble and possibly fall. Our only safest way is to gird up our affections wholly.

This perfect hope is enforced by the whole strain of it: for well may we fix our hope on that happiness to which we are appointed in the eternal election of God, (ver. 2,) and born to it by our new birth, (ver. 3, 4,) and preserved to it by his almighty power, (ver. 5,) and cannot be cut short of it by all the afflictions and oppositions in the way; no, nor so much as deprived by them of our present joy and comfort in the assurance of it, (ver. 6, 7, 8, 9). And then, being taught the greatness and excellency of that blessed salvation, by the doctrine of

the Prophets and Apostles, and the admiration of Angels, all these conspire to confirm our hope, to make it perfect and persevering to the end.

And we may also learn by the foregoing doctrine, that this is the place of our trial and conflict, but the place of our rest is above. We must here have *our loins girt*, but when we come there, we may wear our long white robes at their full length without disturbance, for there is nothing there but peace, and without danger of defilement, for *no unclean thing is there*, yea the streets of that new Jerusalem are paved with gold. To Him then, who hath prepared that city for us, let us ever give praise.

Ver. 14. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance.

15. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

16. Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, says David, *and a light unto my paths* (Psal. cxix. 105): not only comfortable, as light is to the eyes, but withal directive, as a lamp to his feet. Thus here, the Apostle doth not only furnish consolation against distress, but exhorts and directs his brethren in the way of holiness, without which, the apprehension and feeling of those comforts cannot subsist.

This is no other than a clearer and fuller expression, and further pressing of that sobriety and spiritualness of mind and life, which he jointly exhorted unto, with that duty of perfect hope, (ver. 13,) as inseparably connected with it. If you would enjoy this hope, be not conformed to the lusts of your former ignorance, but *be holy*.

There is no doctrine in the world either so pleasant or so pure as that of Christianity: it is matchless, both in sweetness and holiness. The faith and hope of a Christian have in them an abiding precious balm of comfort; but this is never to be so lavished away, as to be poured into the puddle of an impure

conscience: no, that were to lose it unworthily. *As many as have this hope purify themselves, even as He is pure.* (1 John iii. 3.) Here they are commanded to *be holy as He is holy.* Faith first purifies the heart, (Acts xv. 9,) empties it of the love of sin, and then fills it with the consolation of Christ and the hope of glory.

It is a foolish, misgrounded fear, and such as argues inexperience of the nature and workings of Divine grace, to imagine that the assured hope of salvation will beget unholiness and presumptuous boldness in sin, and that therefore the doctrine of that assurance is a doctrine of licentiousness. Our Apostle, we see, is not so sharp-sighted as these men think themselves; he apprehends no such matter, but indeed supposes the contrary as unquestionable; he takes not assured hope and holiness as enemies, but joins them as nearest friends: *hope perfectly* and *be holy.*

They are mutually strengthened and increased each by the other. The more assurance of salvation, the more holiness, the more delight in it, and study of it, as the only way to that end. And as labour is most pleasant when we are made surest it shall not be lost, nothing doth make the soul so nimble and active in obedience as this *oil of gladness*, this assured hope of glory. Again, the more holiness there is in the soul, the clearer always is this assurance; as we see the face of the heavens best when there are fewest clouds. The greatest affliction doth not damp this hope so much as the smallest sin—yea, it may be the more lively and sensible to the soul by affliction; but by sin it always suffers loss, as the experience of all Christians does certainly teach them.

The Apostle exhorts to obedience, and enforceth it by a most persuasive reason. His exhortation is, I. Negative, *Not fashioning yourselves.* II. Positive, *Be ye holy.*

I. For the negative part of the exhortation. That from which he would remove and separate them, is *Lusts:* this is in Scripture the usual name of all the irregular and sinful desires of the heart, both the polluted habits of them and their cor-

rupt streams, both as they exist within, and as they outwardly vent themselves in the lives of men. The Apostle St. John (1 John ii. 17) calls it the *Lust of the world*, and (verse 15) *Love of the world;* and then (verse 16) branches it into those three, which are, indeed, the base anti-trinity that the world worships, *The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.*

The soul of man, unconverted, is no other than a den of impure lusts, wherein dwell pride, uncleanness, avarice, malice, &c., just as Babylon is described, Revel. xviii. 2, or as Isai. xiii. 21. Were a man's eyes opened, he would as much abhor to remain with himself in that condition as to dwell in a house full of snakes and serpents, as St. Austin says. And the first part of conversion is at once to rid the soul of these noisome inhabitants; for there is no one at all found naturally vacant and free from them. Thus the Apostle here expresses of the believers to whom he wrote, that these lusts were theirs before, *in their ignorance.*

There is a truth implied in it, *viz.*, that all sin arises from some kind of ignorance, or, at least, from present inadvertence and inconsideration, turning away the mind from the light; which therefore, for the time, is as if it were not, and is all one with ignorance in the effect. And therefore the works of sin are all called *works of darkness;* for were the true visage of sin seen by a full light, undressed and unpainted, it were impossible, while it so appeared, that any one soul could be in love with it; it would rather fly it, as hideous and abominable. But because the soul unrenewed is all darkness, therefore it is all lust and love of sin; there is no order in it, because no light. As at the first in the world, confusion and darkness went together, and *darkness was upon the face of the deep*, it is so in the soul; the more ignorance, the more abundance of lusts.

That light which frees the soul, and rescues it from the very kingdom of darkness, must be somewhat beyond that which nature can attain to. All the light of philosophy, natural and moral, is not sufficient, yea, the very knowledge of the law,

severed from Christ, serves not so to enlighten and renew the soul, as to free it from the darkness or ignorance here spoken of; for our Apostle writes to Jews who knew the law, and were instructed in it before their conversion, yet he calls those times, wherein Christ was unknown to them, the *times of their ignorance.* Though the stars shine never so bright, and the moon with them in its full, yet they do not altogether make it day; still it is night till the sun appear. Therefore the Hebrew doctors, upon that word of Solomon's, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*, say, *Vana etiam lex, donec venerit Messias:* Vain even the law, until Messiah come. Therefore of him Zacharias says, *The day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace*, Luke i. 78, 79.

A natural man may attain to very much acquired knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, and may discourse excellently of it, and yet still his soul be in the *chains of darkness*, fast locked up under the ignorance here mentioned, and so he may be still of a *carnal mind*, in subjection to these lusts of ignorance.

The saving light of faith is a beam of the *Sun of Righteousness* himself, that he sends into the soul, by which he makes it discern his incomparable beauties, and by that sight alienates it from all those lusts and desires, which do then appear to be what indeed they are, vileness and filthiness itself, making the soul wonder at itself how it could love such base trash so long, and fully resolve now on the choice of Jesus Christ, *the chief among ten thousands*, (Cant. v. 10,) yea, *the fairest of the children of men*, (Psal. xlv. 2,) for that he is withal the only begotten Son of God, *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, (Heb. i. 3.)

The soul, once acquainted with him, can, with disdain, turn off all the base solicitations and importunities of sin, and command them away that formerly had command over it, though they plead former familiarities and the interest they once had in the heart of the Christian before it was enlightened

and renewed. He can well tell them, after his sight of Christ, that it is true, while he knew no better pleasures than they were, he thought them lovely and pleasing, but that one glance of the face of Jesus Christ hath turned them all into extreme blackness and deformity; that so soon as ever Christ appeared to him, they straightway lost all their credit and esteem in his heart, and have lost it for ever; they need never look to recover it any more.

And it is by this that the Apostle enforceth this dehortation. It is true, that the lusts and vanities that are in request in the world, were so with you, but it was when you were blind, they were the lusts of your ignorance; but now you know how ill they will suit with the light of that Gospel which you profess, and that inward light of faith which is in the souls of such as be really believers.

Therefore, seeing you have renounced them, keep them still at that distance; not only never admit them more to lodge within you; that surely you cannot do; but do not so much as for custom sake, and in compliance with the world about you, outwardly conform yourselves to any of them, or make semblance to partake of them: as St. Paul says, *Have no more fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them* (Eph. v. 11): reprove them by your carriage and let the light of your holy lives discover their foulness.

II. We have the positive part of the Apostle's exhortation, *Be ye holy.* This includes the former, the renouncing of the lusts and pollutions of the world, both in heart and life; and adds to it, further, the filling of their room, being cast out, with the beautifying graces of the Spirit of God, and the acting of those graces in their whole conversation both in private and abroad, in conversing with themselves, and conversing with others, whether good or bad, in a constant even course, still like themselves, and like Him who hath called them: for it is a most unseemly and unpleasant thing, to see a man's life full of ups and downs, one step like a Christian, and another like a

worldling; it cannot choose but both pain himself and mar the edification of others.

But as he which hath called you is holy.] Consider whose you are, and you cannot deny that it becomes you to be holy. Consider your near relation to the holy God; this is expressed two ways, namely, *As children*, and *As he which hath called you;* which is all one as if he had said, hath begotten you again. The very outward vocation of those who profess Christ, presseth holiness upon them, but the inward vocation far more. You were running to destruction in the way of sin, and there was a voice which, together with the Gospel preached to your ear, spake into your heart, and called you back from that path of death to the way of holiness, which is the only way of life. He hath severed you from the mass of the profane world, and picked you out to be jewels for himself. He hath set you apart for this end, that you may be *holy to Him;* (as the Hebrew word which signifies *holiness*, imports *setting apart*, or fitting for a peculiar use;) be not then untrue to His design. *He hath not called you to uncleanness, but unto holiness* (1 Thess. iv. 7): therefore *be ye holy*. It is sacrilege for you to dispose of yourselves after the impure manner of the world, and to apply yourselves to any profane use, whom God hath consecrated to himself.

As children.] This is, no doubt, relative to that which he spoke (verse 3) by way of thanksgiving; and that *Wherefore*, in the 13th verse, draws it down hither by way of exhortation. Seeing you are, by a spiritual and new birth, the children of so great and good a Father, who commands you holiness, be obedient children, in being holy; and seeing he himself is most holy, be like him as his children, *Be ye holy, as He is holy.*

As obedient children.] Opposed to that expression, (Eph. ii. 2,) *Sons of disobedience*, or *unbelief*, as the word may be rendered, and that is always the spring of disobedience; sons of mispersuasibleness, who will not be drawn and persuaded by the tenderest mercies of God. Now, though this Hebrew man-

ner of speech, *Sons of obedience*, or *disobedience*, signifies no more than obedient or disobedient persons, yet it doth signify them most emphatically, and means a high degree of obedience or disobedience: these *sons of disobedience* (verse 2) are likewise *sons of wrath* (verse 3).

Of all children, the children of God are the most obliged to obedience, for he is both the wisest and the most loving of Fathers. And the sum of all his commands is that which is their glory and happiness, that they endeavour to be like him, to resemble their heavenly Father. *Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*, says our Saviour (Matt. v. 48). And here the Apostle is citing out of the Law: *Be ye holy, for I am holy* (Levit. xi. 44). Law and Gospel agree in this. Again: children who resemble their fathers, as they grow up in years, they grow the more like to them; thus the children of God do increase in their resemblance, and are daily more and more renewed after his image. There is in them an innate likeness by reason of his image impressed on them in their first renovation, and his Spirit dwelling within them; and there is a continual increase of it arising from their pious imitation and study of conformity, which is here exhorted to.

The imitation of vicious men and the corrupt world is here forbidden. The imitation of men's indifferent customs is base and servile; the imitation of the virtues of good men is commendable; but the imitation of this highest pattern, this primitive goodness, the most holy God, is the top of excellency. It is well said, *Summa religionis est imitari quem colis:* The essence of religion consists in the imitation of Him we worship. All of us offer Him some kind of worship, but few seriously study and endeavour this blessed conformity.

There is unquestionably, among those who profess themselves the people of God, a select number who are indeed his children, and bear his image both in their hearts and in their lives; this impression of holiness is on their souls and their conversation; but with the most, a name and a form of godliness are all they have for religion. Alas! we speak of holiness, and we hear of

it, and it may be we commend it, but we act it not; or, if we do, it is but an acting of it, in the sense in which the word is often taken for a personated acting, as on a stage in the sight of men; not as in the sight of our lovely God, lodging it in our hearts, and from thence diffusing it into all our actions. A child is truly like his father, when not only his visage resembles him, but still more so his mind and inward disposition; thus are the true children of God like their heavenly Father in their words and in their actions, but most of all in heart.

It is no matter though the profane world (which so hates God that it cannot endure his image) do mock and revile; it is thy honour to be, as David said, (2 Sam. vi. 22,) thus *more vile*, in growing still more like unto Him in holiness. What though the polite man count thy fashion a little odd and too precise, it is because he knows nothing above that model of goodness which he hath set himself, and therefore approves of nothing beyond it: he knows not God, and therefore doth not discern and esteem what is most like him. When courtiers come down into the country, the common homebred people possibly think their habit strange; but they care not for that, it is the fashion at court. What need, then, that the godly should be so tender-foreheaded, as to be put out of countenance because the world looks on holiness as a singularity; it is the only fashion in the highest court, yea, of the King of Kings himself.

For I am holy.] As it will raise our endeavour high, to look on the highest pattern, so it will lay our thoughts low concerning ourselves. Men compare themselves with men, and readily with the worst, and flatter themselves with that comparative betterness. This is not the way to see our spots, to look into the muddy streams of profane men's lives; but look into the clear fountain of the word, and there we may both discern and wash them. Consider the infinite holiness of God, and this will humble us to the dust. When Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord, and heard the Seraphim cry, *Holy, holy, holy,* he cried out of his own and the people's unholiness,

Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. (Chap. vi. 3, 4.)

Ver. 17. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

The temptations which meet a Christian in the world, to turn him aside from the straight way of obedience and holiness, are either such as present the hope of some apparent good, to draw him from that way, or the fear of some evil, to drive and affright him from it: and therefore the word of God is much in strengthening the Christian mind against these two; and it doth it especially, by possessing it both with hopes and fears of a higher nature, that do by far weigh down the other.

The most frequent assaults of temptation are upon these two passions of the mind; therefore they are chiefly to be fortified and defended, by a hope and fear opposite to those that do assault us, and sufficiently strong to resist and repel them.

These two, therefore, our Apostle here urges: 1. The *hope* of that glory which the Gospel propounds, and so outbids all the proffers of the world, both in the greatness and the certainty of its promises. 2. The *fear* of God, the greatest and justest judge, alone worthy to be feared and reverenced; the highest anger and enmity of all the world being less than nothing, in comparison of his smallest displeasure. We have here,

I. This fear. II. The reason enforcing it. III. The term or continuance of it.

I. The fear itself—*In fear.* But how suits this with the high discourse that went before, of perfect assured hope, of faith, and love, and joy, yea, joy unspeakable and glorious, arising out of these? How are all those excellencies fallen, as it were, into a dungeon, when fear is mentioned after them! Doth not the Apostle St. John say, that *True love casteth out fear?* (1 John iv. 18.) And is it not more clearly opposite to perfect or assured hope, and to faith and joy?

If ye understand it aright, this is such a fear as doth not prejudice, but preserve those other graces, and the comfort and joy that arise from them; and they all agree so well with it, that they are naturally helps to each other.

It were superfluous to insist on the defining of this passion of fear, and the manifold distinctions of it, either with philosophers or divines. The fear here recommended is, out of question, a holy self-suspicion and fear of offending God, which may not only consist with assured hope of salvation, and with faith, and love, and spiritual joy, but is their inseparable companion; as all divine graces are linked together, (as the heathens said of their three graces,) and, as they dwell together, they grow or decrease together. The more a Christian believes, and loves, and rejoices in the love of God, the more unwilling surely he is to displease him, and if in danger of displeasing him, the more afraid of it; and, on the other side, this fear being the true principle of a wary and holy conversation, fleeing sin, and the occasions of sin, and temptations to it, and resisting them when they make an assault, is as a watch or guard that keeps out the enemies and disturbers of the soul, and so preserves its inward peace, keeps the assurance of faith and hope unmolested, and that joy which they cause, and the intercourse and societies of love betwixt the soul and her beloved, uninterrupted: all which are most in danger when this fear abates and falls to slumbering; for then, some notable sin or other is ready to break in and put all into disorder, and for a time makes those graces, and the comfort of them to present feeling, as much to seek as if they were not there at all.

No wonder, then, that the Apostle, having stirred up his Christian brethren, whatsoever be their estate in the world, to seek to be rich in those jewels of faith, and hope, and love, and spiritual joy, and then, considering that they travel amongst a world of thieves and robbers,—no wonder, I say, that he adds this, advises them to give those their jewels in custody, under God, to this trusty and watchful grace of godly fear; and

having earnestly exhorted them to holiness, he is very fitly particular in this fear, which makes up so great a part of that holiness, that it is often in Scripture named for it all.

Solomon calls it the *beginning* or the *top of wisdom* (Prov. xv. 33): the word signifies both, and it is both. The beginning of it is the beginning of wisdom, and the progress and increase of it is the increase of wisdom. That hardy rashness which many account valour, is the companion of ignorance; and of all rashness, boldness to sin is the most witless and foolish. There is in this, as in all fear, an apprehension of an evil whereof we are in danger. The evil is sin, and the displeasure of God and punishment following upon sin. The godly man judgeth wisely, as the truth is, that sin is the greatest of evils, and the cause of all other evils; it is a transgression of the just law of God, and so a provocation of His just anger, and the cause of those punishments, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, which He inflicts. And then, considering how mighty He is to punish, considering both the power and the reach of his hand, that it is both most heavy and unavoidable, all these things may and should concur to the working of this fear.

There is, no doubt, a great difference betwixt those two kinds of fear that are usually differenced by the names of *servile* and *filial* fear; but certainly, the most genuine fear of the sons of God, who call him Father, doth not exclude the consideration of his justice and of the punishment of sin which his justice inflicts. We see here it is used as the great motive of this fear, that He *judgeth every man according to his works*. And David in that Psalm wherein he so much breathes forth those other sweet affections of love, and hope, and delight in God and in his word, yet expresseth this fear even of the justice of God: *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.* (Psal. cxix. 120.) The flesh is to be awed by Divine judgments, though the higher and surer part of the soul is strongly and freely tied with the cords of love. Temporal corrections, indeed, they fear not so much in

themselves, as that impression of wrath that may be upon them for their sins. (Psal. vi. 1.) That is the main matter of their fear, because their happiness is in His love, and the light of His countenance, that is their life. They regard not how the world looks upon them; they care not who frown, so He smile on them; because no other enemy nor evil in the world can deprive them of this, but their own sin, therefore that is what they fear most.

As the evil is great, so the Christian hath great reason to fear in regard of his danger of it, considering the multitude, strength, and craft of his enemies, and his own weakness and unskilfulness to resist them. And his sad experience in being often foiled, teacheth him that it is thus; he cannot be ignorant of it; he finds how often his own resolutions and purposes deceive him. Certainly, a godly man is sometimes driven to wonder at his own frailty and inconstancy. What strange differences will be betwixt him and himself: how high and how delightful at some times are his thoughts of God and the glory of the life to come; and yet, how easily at another time base temptations will bemire him, or, at the least, molest and vex him! And this keeps him in a continual fear, and that fear in continual vigilancy and circumspectness. When he looks up to God, and considers the truth of his promises, and the sufficiency of his grace and protection, and the almighty strength of his Redeemer, these things fill his soul with confidence and assurance; but when he turns his eye downward again upon himself, and finds so much remaining corruption within, and so many temptations, and dangers, and adversaries without, this forces him not only to fear, but to despair of himself; and it should do so, that his trust in God may be the purer and more entire. That confidence in God will not make him secure and presumptuous in himself, nor that fear of himself make him diffident of God. This fear is not opposite to faith, but high-mindedness and presumption are. (See Rom. xi. 20.) To a natural man it would seem an odd kind of reasoning, that of the apostle, Phil. ii. 12, 13, *It is God*

that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure: therefore, (would he think,) you may save labour, you may sit still and not work, or, if you work, you may work fearlessly, being so sure of His help: but the Apostle is of another mind; his inference is, Therefore, *work out your own salvation*, and work it *with fear and trembling.*

But he that hath assurance of salvation, why should he fear? If there is truth in his assurance, nothing can disappoint him, not sin itself. It is true; but it is no less true, that if he do not fear to sin, there is no truth in his assurance: if is not the assurance of faith, but the mispersuasion of a secure and profane mind. Suppose it so, that the sins of a godly man cannot be such as to cut him short of that salvation whereof he is assured; yet they may be such as for a time will deprive him of that assurance, and not only remove the comfort he hath in that, but let in horrors and anguish of conscience in its stead. Though a believer is freed from hell, (and we may overstrain this assurance in our doctrine, beyond what the soberest and devoutest men in the world can ever find in themselves, though they will not trouble themselves to contest and dispute with them that say they have it,) so that his soul cannot come there; yet some sins may bring as it were a hell into his soul for a time, and this is reason enough for any Christian in his right wits to be afraid of sin. No man would willingly hazard himself upon a fall that may break his leg, or some other bone; though he could be made sure that he should not break his neck, or that his life were not at all in danger, and that he should be perfectly cured, yet the pain and trouble of such a hurt would terrify him, and make him wary and fearful when he walks in danger. The broken bones that David complains of after his fall, may work fear and wariness in those that hear him, though they were ascertained of a like recovery.

This fear is not cowardice; it doth not debase, but elevates the mind; for it drowns all lower fears, and begets true fortitude and courage to encounter all dangers, for the sake of a good conscience and the obeying of God. *The righteous is*

bold as a lion. (Prov. xxviii. 1.) He dares do any thing but offend God; and to dare to do that is the greatest folly, and weakness and baseness in the world. From this fear have sprung all the generous resolutions and patient sufferings of the saints and martyrs of God; because they durst not sin against Him, therefore they durst be imprisoned, and impoverished, and tortured, and die for Him. Thus the prophet sets carnal and godly fear as opposite, and the one expelling the other. (Isa. viii. 12, 13.) And our Saviour, (Luke xii. 4,) *Fear not them that kill the body: but fear Him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him.* Fear not, but fear; and therefore fear, that you may not fear. This fear is like the trembling that hath been observed in some of great courage before battles. Moses was bold and fearless in dealing with a proud and wicked king, but when God appeared, he said, (as the apostle informs us,) *I exceedingly fear and quake.* (Heb. xii. 21.)

II. The reason we have here to persuade to this fear is twofold: 1. Their relation to God. 2. Their relation to the world.

1. To God as their Father and as their Judge. Because you do call him Father, and profess yourselves his children, *begotten again* by Him, (for this verse looks back to that expression,) it becomes you, as obedient children to stand in awe, and fear to offend him your Father, and a Father so full of goodness and tender love. But as he is the best Father, so consider that he is withal the greatest and justest Judge: *He judges every man according to his work.*

God always sees and discerns men and all their works, and *judgeth,* that is, accounteth of them, as they are, and sometimes in this life declares this his judgment of them to their own consciences, and in some to the view of others, in visible punishments and rewards; but the most solemn judgment of all is reserved to that great day which he hath appointed, *wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by his Son Jesus.* (Acts xvii. 32.)

There is here, the *sovereignty* of this Judge, the *universality* of his judgment, and the *equity* of it. All must answer at His great court; He is supreme judge of the world. He made it, and hath therefore unquestionable right to judge it. *He judgeth every man;* and it is a most righteous judgment, which hath these two in it: 1. An exact and perfect knowledge of all men's works; 2. Impartial judgment of them so known. This second is expressed negatively, by removing the crooked rule which man's judgment often follows; it is without consideration of those personal differences which men eye so much. And the first is according to the work itself. (Job xxxiv. 19.) *He accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor;* and the reason is added there, *For they are all the work of his hands.* He made all the persons, and he makes all those differences Himself as it pleaseth Him; therefore He doth not admire them as we do, no, nor at all regard them. We find very great odds betwixt stately palaces and poor cottages, betwixt a prince's robes and a beggar's cloak; but to God they are all one; all these petty differences vanish in comparison of his own greatness. Men are great and small, compared one with another; but they altogether amount to just nothing in respect of Him. We find high mountains and low valleys on this earth; but compared with the vast compass of the heavens, it is all but as a point, and hath no sensible greatness at all.

Nor regards he any other differences to bias his judgment, from the works of men, to their persons. You profess the true religion, and call him Father; but if you live devoid of his fear, and be disobedient children, he will not spare you because of that relation, but rather punish you the more severely. Because you pretended to be His children, and yet obeyed him not, therefore you shall find Him your judge, and an impartial judge of your works. Remember, therefore, that your Father is this judge, and fear to offend him. But then, indeed, a believer may look back to the other for comfort, who abuses it not to a sinful security. He resolves thus willingly; "I will not sin,

because my Father is this just Judge: but for my frailties I will hope for mercy, because the Judge is my Father."

Their works.] This comprehends all actions and words, yea, thoughts; and each work entirely, taken outside and inside together; for he sees all alike, and judgeth according to all together. He looks on the wheels and paces within, as well as on the handle without, and therefore ought we to fear the least crookedness of our intentions in the best works; for if we entertain any such, and study not singleness of heart, this will cast all, though we pray and hear the word, and preach it, and live outwardly unblameably. And in that great judgment, all secret things shall be manifest; as they are always open to the eye of this Judge, so He shall then open them before men and angels: therefore let the remembrance and frequent consideration of this All-seeing Judge, and of that great judgment, waken our hearts, and beget in us this fear. (2 Cor. v. 10, 11.) If you would have confidence in that day, and not fear it when it comes, fear it now, so as to avoid sin: for they that now tremble at it, shall then, when it comes, lift up their faces with joy; and they that will not fear it now shall then be overwhelmed with fears and terror; they shall have such a burden of fear then, as that they shall account the hills and mountains lighter than it.

Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.] In this I conceive is implied another persuasive of this fear, arising, 2. From their relation to this world .You are *sojourners* and *strangers*, (as here the word signifies,) and a wary circumspect carriage becomes strangers, because they are most exposed to wrongs and hard accidents. You are encompassed with enemies and snares; how can you be secure in the midst of them? This is not your rest; watchful fear becomes this your sojourning. Perfect peace and security are reserved for you at home, and that is the last term of this fear: it continues all the time of this sojourning life, dies not before us; we and it shall expire together.

III. This, then, is the term or continuance of this fear.

Blessed is he that feareth always, says Solomon; (Prov. xxviii. 14;) in secret and in society in his own house and in God's. We must hear the word with fear, and preach it with fear, afraid to miscarry in our intentions and manners. *Serve the Lord with fear*, yea, in times of inward comfort and joy, yet *rejoice with trembling.* (Psal. ii. 11.) Not only when a man feels most his own weakness, but when he finds himself strongest. None are so high advanced in grace here below, as to be out of need of this grace; but when their sojourning shall be done, and they are come home to their father's house above, then no more fearing. No entrance for dangers there, and therefore no fear. A holy reverence of the majesty of God they shall indeed have then most of all, as the angels still have, because they shall see Him most clearly, and because the more he is known, the more he is reverenced; but this fear that relates to danger, shall then vanish, for in that world there is neither sin, nor sorrow for sin, nor temptation to sin; no more conflicts, but after a full and final victory, an eternal peace, an everlasting triumph. Not only fear, but faith and hope, do imply some imperfection not consistent with that blessed estate; and therefore all of them, having obtained their end, shall end: *faith* in *sight*, *hope* in *possession*, and *fear* in *perfect safety;* and everlasting love and delight shall fill the whole soul in the vision of God.

Ver. 18. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.

19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

It is impossible for a Christian to give himself to conform to the world's ungodliness, unless first he forgets who he is, and by what means he attained to be what he is. Therefore the Apostle, persuading his brethren to holiness, puts them in mind of this, as the strongest incentive. Not only have you the example of God set before you as your Father, to beget in

you the love of holiness, as being your liveliest resemblance of him; and the justice of God as your judge, to argue you into a pious fear of offending him; but consider this, that he is your Redeemer; he hath bought out your liberty from sin and the world, to be altogether His; and think on the price laid down in this ransom; and these out of question will prevail with you.

We have here, 1. The evil dissuaded from, *viz.*, *A vain conversation.* 2. The dissuasion itself.

1. It is called *their vain conversation.* 2. *Received by tradition from their fathers.* By this I conceive is to be understood, not only the superstitions and vain devices in religion, which abounded amongst the Jews by tradition, for which our Saviour often reproved them while he was conversant among them, as we find in the Gospel; (and all this was meant, v. 14, by *the lusts of their former ignorance;*) but generally, all the corrupt and sinful customs of their lives: for it seems not so pertinent to his purpose when exhorting to holiness of life, to speak of their superstitious traditions, as of their other sinful habitudes, which are no less hereditary, and, by the power of example, traditional; which, by reason of their common root in man's sinful nature, do so easily pass from parents to children, nature making their example powerful, and the corruption of nature giving it most power in that which is evil. And this is the rather mentioned to take away the force of it, and cut off that influence which it might have had in their minds. There is a kind of conversation that the authority of your fathers pleads for; but remember, that it is that very thing from which you are delivered, and you are called to a new state and form of life, and have a new pattern set before you, instead of that corrupt example.

It is one great error, not only in religion and manners, but even in human science, that men are ready to take things upon trust, unexamined, from those that went before them, partly out of easiness and sparing the pains of trial, partly out of a superstitious over-esteem of their authority: but the chief

reason why corruptions in religion, and in the practice of preceding ages, takes so much with posterity, is that before mentioned, the universal sympathy and agreement which those evils have with the corrupt nature of man.

The prophet Ezekiel observes this particularly in the Jews, (chap. xx. ver. 24,) *That their eyes were after their fathers' idols*, contrary to God's express forewarning (ver. 18). This was the great quarrel of the Heathens against the Christian religion in the primitive times, that it was new, and unknown to their fathers; and the ancient writers of those times are frequent in showing the vanity of this exception, particularly *Lactantius, Instit. lib. 2. cap. 7, 8.* The same prejudice doth the Church of Rome sing over continually against the reformed religion: Where was it before Luther? &c. But this is a foolish and unreasonable diversion from the search of truth, because error is more at hand; or from the entertaining it, being found, because falsehood is in possession.

As in religion, so in the course and practice of men's lives, the stream of sin runs from one age into another, and every age makes it greater, adding somewhat to what it receives, as rivers grow in their course by the accession of brooks that fall into them; and every man when he is born falls like a drop into this main current of corruption, and so is carried down with it, and this by reason of its strength, and his own nature, which willingly dissolves into it, and runs along with it. In this is manifest the power of Divine grace in a man's conversion, that it severs him so powerfully from the profane world, and gives him strength to run contrary to the great current of wickedness that is round about him, in his parents possibly, and in his kindred and friends, and in the most of men that he meets withal. The voice of God, that powerful word of effectual calling which he speaks in to the heart, makes a man break through all, and leave all to follow God, as Abraham did, being called out from his kindred and father's house, to journey towards the land that God had promised him. And this is that which is spoken to the Church, and

to each believing soul, by the Spirit of God: *Forget also thine own people and thy father's house, so shall the king greatly delight in thy beauty* (Psal. xlv. 10, 11). Regard not what others think, though they be thy nearest friends, but study only to please Him, and then thou shalt please him indeed. Do not deform thy face with looking out asquint to the custom of the world, but look straight forward on Him, and so thou shalt be beautiful in His eyes. When God calls a man in a remarkable manner, his profane friends are all in a tumult; what needs this to be more precise than we and all your neighbours? But all this is a confused noise that works nothing on the heart which the lord hath touched: it must follow Him, though by trampling upon friends and kindred, if they lie in the way. We see how powerfully a word from Christ drew his disciples to leave all and follow him.

The *exhortation* is against all sinful and unholy conversation, by what authority and example soever recommended to us. The Apostle's reasons in these words are strong and pressing; there is one expressed in the very name he gives it; *it is vain conversation.*

The mind of man, the guide and source of his actions, while it is estranged from God, is nothing but a forge of vanities. The Apostle St. Paul speaks this of the Gentiles, that *they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened,* (Rom. i. 21,) their great naturalists and philosophers not excepted; and the more they strove to play the wise men, the more they befooled themselves. Thus likewise Eph. iv. 17. And thus the Lord complains by his prophet Isaiah, of the extreme folly of his people, (ch. xliv. v. 20,) and by Jeremy, that *their hearts are lodges of vain thoughts* (ch. iv. v. 14); and these are the true cause of a *vain conversation.*

The whole course of a man's life out of Christ is nothing but a continual trading in vanity, running a circle of toil and labour, and reaping no profit at all. This is the vanity of every natural man's conversation, that not only others are not

benefited by it, but it is fruitless to himself; there arises to him no solid good out of it. That is most truly vain, which attains not its proper end; now, since all a man's endeavours aim at his satisfaction and contentment, that conversation which gives him nothing of that, but removes him further from it, is justly called *vain conversation. What fruit had ye,* says the Apostle, *in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?* (Rom. vi. 21.) Either count that shame which at the best grows out of them, their fruit, or confess they have none; therefore they are called *the unfruitful works of darkness.* (Ephes. v. 11.)

Let the voluptuous person say it out upon his death-bed, what pleasure or profit doth then abide with him of all his former sinful delights. Let him tell if there remain any thing of them all, but that which he would gladly not have to remain, the sting of an accusing conscience, which is as lasting as the delight of sin was short and vanishing. Let the covetous and ambitious declare freely, even those of them who have prospered most in their pursuit of riches and honour, what ease all their possessions or titles do then help them to; whether their pains are the less because their chests are full, or their houses stately, or a multitude of friends and servants waiting on them with hat and knee. And if all these things cannot ease the body, how much less can they quiet the mind! And therefore is it not true, that all pains in these things, and the uneven ways into which they sometimes stept aside to serve those ends, and generally, that all the ways of sin wherein they have wearied themselves, were vain rollings and tossings up and down, not tending to a certain haven of peace and happiness? It is a lamentable thing to be deluded a whole life-time with a false dream. (See Isaiah ii. 8.)

You that are going on in the common road of sin, although many, and possibly your own parents, have trodden it before you, and the greatest part of those you now know are in it with you, and keep you company in it, yet, be persuaded to stop a little, and ask yourselves what is it you seek, or expect

in the end of it. Would it not grieve any labouring man to work hard all the day, and have no wages to look for at night? It is a greater loss to wear out our whole life, and in the evening of our days find nothing but anguish and vexation. Let us then think this, that so much of our life as is spent in the ways of sin, is all lost, fruitless, and *vain conversation*.

And in so far as the Apostle says here, *You are redeemed from this conversation*, this imports it to be a servile slavish condition, as the other word, *vain*, expresses it to be fruitless. And this is the madness of a sinner, that he fancies liberty in that which is the basest thraldom; as those poor frantic persons that are lying ragged, and bound in chains, yet imagine that they are kings, that their irons are chains of gold, their rags robes, and their filthy lodge a palace. As it is misery to be liable to the sentence of death, so it is slavery to be subject to the dominion of sin; and he that is delivered from the one, is likewise set free from the other. There is one redemption from both. He that is redeemed from destruction by the blood of Christ, is likewise redeemed from that vain and unholy conversation that leads to it. So, Tit. ii. 14. Our Redeemer was anointed for this purpose, not to free the captives from the sentence of death, and yet leave them still in prison, but to *proclaim liberty to them, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.* (Isa. lxi. 1.)

You easily persuade yourselves that Christ hath died for you, and redeemed you from hell; but you consider not that, if it be so, he hath likewise redeemed you from your vain conversation, and hath set you free from the service of sin. Certainly, while you find not that, you can have no assurance of the other: if the chains of sin continue still upon you, for any thing you can know, these chains do bind you over to the other *chains of darkness* the Apostle speaks of, 2 Pet. ii. 4. Let us not delude ourselves; if we find the love of sin and of the world work stronger in our hearts than the love of Christ, we are not as yet partakers of his redemption.

But if we have indeed laid hold upon him as our Redeemer,

then are we redeemed from the service of sin; not only from the grossest profaneness, but even from all kind of fruitless and *vain conversation*. And therefore ought we to *stand fast in that liberty, and not to entangle ourselves again to any of our former vanities*. (Gal. v. 1.)

Not redeemed with corruptible things.] From the high price of our redemption, the Apostle doth mainly enforce our esteem of it, and urge the preservation of that liberty so dearly bought, and the avoiding all that unholiness and vain conversation, from which we are freed by that redemption. First, he expresseth it negatively, *not with corruptible things;* (Oh! foolish we, who hunt them, as if they were incorruptible and everlasting treasures!) no, not the best of them, those that are in highest account with men, *not with silver and gold;* these are not of any value at all towards the ransom of souls, they cannot buy off the death of the body, nor purchase the continuance of temporal life, much less can they reach to the worth of spiritual and eternal life. The precious soul could not be redeemed but by blood, and by no blood but that of this spotless Lamb, Jesus Christ, who is God equal with the Father; and therefore his blood is called *The blood of God*, (Acts xx.) So that the Apostle may well call it here *precious*, exceeding the whole world, and all things in it, in value. Therefore frustrate not the sufferings of Christ: if he shed his blood to redeem you from sin, be not false to his purpose.

As a lamb without blemish.] He is that great and everlasting sacrifice which gave value and virtue to all the sacrifices under the Law: their blood was of no worth to the purging away of sin, but by relation to his blood; and the laws concerning the choice of the Paschal Lamb, or other lambs for sacrifice, were but obscure and imperfect shadows of His purity and perfections, who is the undefiled *Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*. (John i. 29.) A lamb in meekness and silence, *he opened not his mouth*. (Isa. liii. 7.) And in purity here, *without spot or blemish. My well-beloved,*

says the spouse, *is white and ruddy;* (Cant. v. 10;)—white in spotless innocency, and red in suffering a bloody death.

Forasmuch as ye know.] It is that must make all this effectual, the right knowledge and due consideration of it. Ye do know it already, but I would have you know it better, more deeply and practically: turn it often over, be more in the study and meditation of it. There is work enough in it still for the most discerning mind; it is a mystery so deep, that you shall never reach the bottom of it, and withal so useful, that you shall find always new profit by it. Our folly is, we gape after new things, and yet are in effect ignorant of the things we think we know best. That learned Apostle who knew so much, and spoke so many tongues, yet says, *I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* (1 Cor. ii. 2.) And again he expresses this as the top of his ambition, *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.* (Phil. iii. 10.) That conformity is this only knowledge. He that hath his lusts unmortified, and a heart unweaned from the world, though he know all the history of the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and can discourse well of them, yet indeed he knows them not.

If you would increase much in holiness, and be strong against the temptations to sin, this is the only art of it; view much, and so seek to know much of the death of Jesus Christ. Consider often at how high a rate we were redeemed from sin, and provide this answer for all the enticements of sin and the world: "Except you can offer my soul something beyond that "price that was given for it on the cross, I cannot hearken to "you."—"Far be it from me," will a Christian say, who considers this redemption, "that ever I should prefer a base "lust, or anything in this world, or it all, to Him who gave "himself to death for me, and paid my ransom with his "blood. His matchless love hath freed me from the miserable captivity of sin, and hath for ever fastened me to the

"sweet yoke of his obedience. Let him alone to dwell and rule "within me, and never let him go forth from my heart, who "for my sake refused to come down from the cross."

Ver. 20. Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world; but was manifest in these last times for you.

Of all those considerations (and there are many) that may move men to obedience, there is no one that persuades both more sweetly and strongly, than the sense of God's goodness and mercy towards men; and amongst all the evidences of that, there is none like the sending and giving of his Son for man's redemption: therefore the Apostle, having mentioned that, insists further on it; and in these words, expresses, 1. The purpose; 2. The performance; and 3. The application of it.

1. The purpose or *decree fore-known;* but it is well rendered *fore-ordained*, for this knowing is decreeing, and there is little either solid truth or profit in the distinguishing them.

We say usually, that where there is little wisdom there is much chance; and comparatively amongst men, some are far more foresighted, and of further reach than others: yet the wisest and most provident men, both wanting skill to design all things aright, and power to act as they contrive, meet with many unexpected casualties and frequent disappointments in their undertakings. But with God, where both wisdom and power are infinite, there can be neither any chance nor resistance from without, nor any imperfection at all in the contrivance of things within Himself, that can give cause to add, or abate, or alter any thing in the frame of His purposes. The model of the whole world, and of all the course of time, was with Him one and the same from all eternity; and whatsoever is brought to pass, is exactly answerable to that pattern, for with Him *there is no change nor shadow of turning.* (James i. 17.) There is nothing dark to *the Father of Lights:* He sees at one view through all things, and all ages, from the beginning of time to the end of it, yea, from eternity to eternity. And this incom-

prehensible wisdom is too wonderful for us; we do but childishly stammer when we offer to speak of it.

It is no wonder that men beat their own brains, and knock their heads one against another, in the contest of their opinions, to little purpose, in their several mouldings of God's decree. Is not this to cut and square God's thoughts to ours, and examine his sovereign purposes by the low principles of human wisdom? How much more learned than all such knowledge, is the Apostle's ignorance, when he cries out, *O! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* (Rom. xi. 33.) Why then should any man debate what place, in the series of God's decrees, is to be assigned to this purpose of sending his Son in the flesh! Let us rather (seeing it is manifest that it was for the redemption of lost mankind) admire that same love of God to mankind, which appears in that purpose of our recovery by the *Word made flesh;* that before man had made himself miserable, yea, before either he or the world was made, this thought of boundless love was in the bosom of God; to send his Son forth from thence, to bring fallen man out of misery, and restore him to happiness; and to do this, not only by taking on his nature, but the curse: to shift it off from us that were sunk under it, and to bear it himself, and by bearing to take it away. *He laid on him the iniquity of us all.* And to this he was appointed, says the Apostle, Heb. iii. 2.

Before the foundation of the world.] *This we understand by faith, that the world was framed by the word of God.* (Heb. xi. 3.) Although the learned probably think it evincible by human reason, yet some of those who have gloried most in that, and are reputed generally masters of reason, have not seen it by that light. Therefore, that we may have a divine belief of it, we must learn it from the word of God, and be persuaded of its truth by the Spirit of God, that the whole world, and all things in it, were drawn out of nothing by his Almighty power, who is the only eternal and increated Being, and therefore the fountain and source of Being to all things.

Foundation.] In this word is plainly intimated the resemblance of the world to a building; and such a building it is, as doth evidence the greatness of him who framed it; so spacious, rich, and comely, so firm a foundation, raised to so high and stately a roof, and set with a variety of stars, as with jewels, therefore called, as some conceive it, *the work of his fingers*, (Psal. viii.,) to express the curious artifice that appears in them. Though naturalists have attempted to give the reason of the earth's stability from its heaviness, which stays it necessarily in the lowest part of the world, yet that abates not our admiring the wisdom and power of God, in laying its foundation so, and establishing it; for it is His will that is the first cause of that, its nature, and hath appointed that to be the property of its heaviness, to fix it there; and therefore Job alleges this amongst the wonderful works of God, and evidences of his power, that *He hangeth the earth upon nothing.* (Job xxvi. 7.)

Before there was time, or place, or any creature, God, the blessed Trinity, was in Himself, and as the Prophet speaks, *inhabiting eternity*, completely happy in Himself: but intending to manifest and communicate His goodness, He gave being to the world, and to time with it; made all to set forth His goodness, and the most excellent of his creatures to contemplate and enjoy it. But amongst all the works he intended before time, and in time effected, this is the master-piece, which is here said to be fore-ordained, the manifesting of God in the flesh for man's redemption, and that by his Son Jesus Christ, as *the first born amongst many brethren*, in order that those appointed for salvation should be rescued from the common misery, and be made one mystical body, whereof Christ is the head, and so entitled to that everlasting glory and happiness that he hath purchased for them.

This, I say, is the great work, wherein all those glorious attributes shine jointly, the wisdom, and power, and goodness, justice and mercy of God. As in great maps, or pictures, you will see the border decorated with meadows, and fountains, and flowers, &c., represented in it, but in the middle you have

the main design; thus is this fore-ordained redemption amongst the works of God: all His other works in the world, all the beauty of the creatures, and the succession of ages, and things that come to pass in them, are but as the border to this as the main piece. But as a foolish unskilful beholder, not discerning the excellency of the principal piece in such maps or pictures, gazes only on the fair border, and goes no further, thus do the greatest part of us; our eyes are taken with the goodly shew of the world and appearance of earthly things: but as for this great work of God, Christ *fore-ordained*, and in time sent for our redemption, though it most deserves our attentive regard, yet we do not view and consider it as we ought.

2. We have the performance of that purpose, *Was manifested in these last times for you.* He was manifested both by his incarnation, according to that word of the Apostle St. Paul, *manifested in the flesh*, (1 Tim. iii. 16,) and manifested by his marvellous works and doctrine; by his sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension, by the sending down of the Holy Ghost according to his promise, and by the preaching of the Gospel, in the fulness of time that God had appointed, wherein all the prophecies that foretold his coming, and all the types and ceremonies that figured him, had their accomplishment.

The times of the Gospel are often called *the last times*, by the prophets; for that the Jewish priesthood and ceremonies being abolished, that which succeeded was appointed by God to remain the same to the end of the world. Besides this, the time of our Saviour's incarnation may be called *the last times*, because although it were not near the end of time by many ages, yet in all probability it is much nearer the end of time than the beginning of it. Some resemble the time of his sufferings in the end of the world, to the Paschal Lamb which was slain in the evening

It was doubtless the fit time; but notwithstanding the schoolmen offer at reasons to prove the fitness of it, as their humour is to prove all things, none dare, I think, conclude, but if God

had so appointed, it might have been either sooner or later. And our safest way is to rest in this, that it was the fit time, because so it pleased Him, and to seek no other reason why, having promised the Messiah so quickly after man's fall, He deferred his coming about four thousand years, and a great part of that time shut up the knowledge of Himself and the true religion, within the narrow compass of that one nation of which Christ was to be born; of these and such like things we can give no other reason than that which he teacheth us in a like case, *Even so, Father, because it seemeth good unto thee.* (Matt. xi. 26.)

3. The application of this manifestation, *For you.*] The Apostle represents these things to those he writes to, particularly for their use; therefore he applies it to them, but without prejudice of the believers who went before, or of those who were to follow in after-ages. He who is here said to be *foreappointed* before the foundation of the world, is therefore called *A Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* (Rev. xiii. 8.) And as the virtue of his death looks backward to all preceding ages, whose faith and sacrifices looked forward to it; so the same death is of force and perpetual value to the end of the world. *After he had offered one sacrifice for sins*, says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, (ch. x. ver. 12, 14,) *he sat down for ever on the right hand of God; for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* The cross on which he was extended, points, in the length of it, to heaven and earth, reconciling them together; and, in the breadth of it, to former and following ages, as being equally salvation to both.

In this appropriating and peculiar interest in Jesus Christ lies our happiness, without which it avails not that he was ordained from eternity, and in time manifested. It is not the general contemplation, but the peculiar possession of Christ, that gives both solid comfort and strong persuasion to obedience and holiness, which is here the Apostle's particular scope.

Ver. 21. Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.

Now, because it is faith that gives the soul this particular title to Jesus Christ, the Apostle adds this, to declare whom he meant by *you*. *For you*, says he, *who by him do believe in God*, &c.

Where we have, 1. The complete object of faith. 2. The ground or warrant of it. The object, *God in Christ*. The ground or warrant, *In that he raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory*.

A man may have, while living out of Christ, yea, he must, he cannot choose but have, a conviction within him, that there is a God; and further he may have, even out of Christ, some kind of belief of those things that are spoken concerning God; but to repose on God as his God and his salvation, which is indeed to believe in Him, this cannot be but where Christ is the *medium* through which we look upon God: for so long as we look upon God through our own guiltiness, we can see nothing but His wrath, and apprehend Him as an armed enemy; and therefore are so far from resting on Him as our happiness, that the more we view it, it puts us upon the more speed to fly from Him, and to cry out, *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings, and abide with a consuming fire?* But our Saviour, taking sin out of the way, puts himself betwixt our sins and God, and so makes a wonderful change of our apprehension of Him. When you look through a red glass, the whole heavens seem bloody; but through pure uncoloured glass, you receive the clear light that is so refreshing and comfortable to behold. When sin unpardoned is betwixt, and we look on God through that, we can perceive nothing but anger and enmity in His countenance; but make Christ once the *medium*, our pure Redeemer, and through Him, as clear transparent glass, the beams of God's favourable countenance shine in upon the soul. The Father cannot look upon his well-beloved Son but graciously and pleasingly. God looks on us out of Christ,

sees us rebels, and fit to be condemned: we look on God as being just and powerful to punish us; but when Christ is betwixt, God looks on us in him as justified, and we look on God in him as pacified, and see the smiles of His favourable countenance. Take Christ out, all is terrible; interpose him, all is full of peace: therefore set him always betwixt and by him we shall believe in God.

The warrant and ground of believing in God by Christ is this, that God *raised him from the dead, and gave him glory*, which evidences the full satisfaction of his death; and in all that work, both in his humiliation and exaltation, standing in our room, we may repute it his as ours. If all is paid that could be exacted of him, and therefore he set free from death, then are we acquitted, and have nothing to pay. If he was raised from the dead, and exalted to glory, then so shall we; He hath taken possession of that glory for us, and we may judge ourselves possessed of it already, because He, our head, possesseth it. And this the last words of the verse confirm to us, implying this to be the very purpose and end for which God, having given him to death, *raised him up and gave him glory;* it is for this end, expressly, that *our faith and hope might be in God.* The last end is, that we may have life and glory through him; the nearer end, that in the mean while, till we attain them, we may have firm belief and hope of them, and rest on God as the giver of them, and so in part enjoy them beforehand, and be upheld in our joy and conflicts by the comfort of them. And as St. Stephen in his vision, Faith doth, in a spiritual way, look through all the visible heavens, and see Christ at the Father's right hand, and is comforted by that in the greatest troubles, though it were amidst a shower of stones, as St. Stephen was. The comfort is no less than this, that being by faith made one with Christ, his present glory, wherein he sits at the Father's right hand, is an assurance to us, that *where he is we shall be also.* (John xiv. 3.)

Ver. 22. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.

Jesus Christ is made unto us of God, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* (1 Cor. i. 30.) It is a known truth, and yet very needful to be often represented to us, that redemption and holiness are undivided companions, yea, that we are redeemed on purpose for this end, that we should be holy. The pressing of this, we see, is here the Apostle's scope; and having by that reason enforced it in the general, he now takes that as concluded and confessed, and so makes use of it particularly to exhort to the exercise of that main Christian grace of *brotherly love.*

The obedience and holiness mentioned in the foregoing verses, comprehend the whole duties and frame of a Christian life towards God and men: and having urged that in the general, he specifies this grace of mutual Christian love, as the great evidence of their sincerity and the truth of their love to God; for men are subject to much hypocrisy this way, and deceive themselves: if they find themselves diligent in religious exercises, they scarcely once ask their hearts how they stand affected this way, namely, in love to their brethren. They can come constantly to the church, and pray, it may be, at home too, and yet cannot find in their hearts to forgive an injury.

As forgiving injuries argues the truth of piety, so it is that which makes all converse both sweet and profitable; and besides, it graces and commends men in their holy profession, to such as are without and strangers to it, yea, even to their enemies.

Therefore is it that our Saviour doth so much recommend this to his disciples, and they to others, as we see in all their Epistles. He gives it them as the very badge and livery by which they should be known for his followers: *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye love one another,*

xiii. 35.) And St. Paul is frequent in exhorting to, and extolling this grace. (See Rom. xii. 10, and xiii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 13; Gal. v. 13; Eph. iv. 2; and in many other places.) He calls it *the bond of perfectness*, (Col. iii. 14,)—that grace which unites and binds altogether. So doth our Apostle here, and often in this and the other Epistle; and that beloved disciple St. John, who leaned on our Saviour's breast, drank deep of that spring of love that was here, and therefore it streams forth so abundantly in his writings: they contain nothing so much as this divine doctrine of love.

We have here, 1. The due qualifications of it. 2. A Christian's obligation to it.

The *qualifications* are three; namely, *sincerity*, *purity*, and *fervency*. The *sincerity* is expressed in the former clause of the verse, *unfeigned love*, and repeated again in the latter part, that it be *with a pure heart*, as the *purity* is included in *fervency*.

1. Love must be *unfeigned*. It appears that this dissimulation is a disease that is very incident in this particular. The Apostle St. Paul hath the same word, (Rom. xii. 9,) and the Apostle St. John to the same sense (1 John iii. 18.) That it have that double reality which is opposed to double-dissembled love; that it be cordial and effectual; that the professing of it arise from truth of affection, and, as much as may be, be seconded with action; that both the heart and the hand may be the seal of it rather than the tongue; not court holy-water and empty noise of service and affection, that fears nothing more than to be put upon trial. Although thy brother with whom thou conversest, cannot, it may be, see through thy false appearances, He who commands this love looks chiefly within, seeks it there, and if He find it not there, hates them most who most pretend it; so that the art of dissembling, though never so well studied, cannot pass in this King's court, to whom all hearts are open and all desires known. When, after variances, men are brought to an agreement, they are much subject to this, rather to cover their remaining malices

with superficial verbal forgiveness, than to dislodge them, and free the heart of them. This is a poor self-deceit. As the philosopher said to him, who being ashamed that he was espied by him in a tavern in the outer room, withdrew himself to the inner, he called after him, "That is not the way out; the "more you go that way, you will be the further within it:" so when hatreds are upon admonition not thrown out, but retire inward to hide themselves, they grow deeper and stronger than before; and those constrained semblances of reconcilement are but a false healing, do but skin the wound over, and therefore it usually breaks forth worse again.

How few there are that have truly maliceless hearts, and find this entire upright affection towards their brethren meeting them in their whole conversation, this *law of love* deeply impressed on their hearts, and from thence expressed in their words and actions, and that is *unfeigned love*, as real to their brethren as to themselves!

2. It must be *pure*, from a pure heart. This is not all one with the former, as some take it. It is true, doubleness or hypocrisy is an impurity, and a great one; but all impurity is not doubleness: one may really mean that friendship and affection he expresses, and yet it may be most contrary to that which is here required, because *impure;* such a *brotherly love* as that of Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity, as the expressing them *brethren* (Gen. xlix.) is taken to mean. When hearts are cemented together by impurity itself, by ungodly conversation and society in sin, as in uncleanness or drunkenness, &c., this is a swinish fraternity, a friendship which is contracted, as it were, by wallowing in the same mire. Call it good fellowship, or what you will, all the fruit that in the end can be expected out of unholy friendliness and fellowship in sinning together, is, to be tormented together, and to add each to the torment of another.

The mutual love of Christians must be pure, arising from such causes as are pure and spiritual, from the sense of our Saviour's command and of his example; for he himself joins

that with it, *A new commandment give I you*, saith he, *that as I have loved you, so you also love one another* (John xiii. 34). They that are indeed lovers of God are united, by that their hearts meet in Him, as in one centre: they cannot but love one another. Where a godly man sees his Father's image, he is forced to love it; he loves those whom he perceives godly, so as to delight in them, because that image is in them; and those that appear destitute of it, he loves them so as to wish them partakers of that image. And this is all for God: he loves *amicum in Deo, et inimicum propter Deum:* that is, he loves a friend in God, and an enemy for God. And as the Christian's love is pure in its cause, so in its effects and exercise. His society and converse with any tends mainly to this, that he may mutually help and be helped in the knowledge and love of God; he desires most that he and his brethren may jointly mind their journey heavenwards, and further one another in their way to the full enjoyment of God. And this is truly the love of a pure heart, which both begins and ends in God.

3. We must love *fervently*, not after a cold indifferent manner. Let the love of your brethren be as a fire within you, consuming that selfishness which is so contrary to it, and is so natural to men; let it set your thoughts on work to study how to do others good; let your love be an active love, intense within you, and extending itself in doing good to the souls and bodies of your brethren as they need, and you are able: *Alium re, alium consilio, alium Gratiâ:* (Seneca *de beneficiis*, lib. i. c. 2:) One by money, another by counsel, another by kindness.

It is self-love that contracts the heart, and shuts out all other love, both of God and man, save only so far as our own interest carries, and that is still self-love: but the love of God dilates the heart, purifies love, and extends it to all men, but after a special manner directs it to those who are more peculiarly beloved of him, and that is here the particular love required.

Love of the brethren.] In this is implied our obligation after a special manner to love those of *the household of faith*,

because they are our *brethren*. This includes not only, as Abraham saith, *that there ought to be no strife*, (Gen. xiii. 8,) but it binds most strongly to this sincere, and pure, and fervent love; and therefore the Apostle, in the next verse, repeats expressly the doctrine of the mysterious new birth, and explains it more fully, which he had mentioned in the entrance of the Epistle, and again referred to, *v.* 14, 17.

There is in this fervent love, sympathy with the griefs of our brethren, desire and endeavour to help them, bearing their infirmities, and recovering them too, if it may be; raising them when they fall, admonishing and reproving them as is needful, sometimes sharply, and yet still in love; rejoicing in their good, in their gifts and graces, so far from envying them, that we be glad as if they were our own. There is the same blood running in their veins: you have the same Father and the same Spirit within you, and the same Jesus Christ, the head of that glorious fraternity, *The first-born among many brethren* (Rom. viii. 29); of whom the Apostle saith, that *He hath re-collected into one, all things in Heaven and in earth* (Eph. i. 10). The word is, *gathered them into one head;* and so suits very fitly to express our union in him. *In whom,* says he in the same Epistle, (Eph. iv. 16,) *the whole body is fitly compacted together;* and he adds that which agrees to our purpose, that this body *grows up and edifies itself in love.* All the members receive spirits from the same head, and are useful and serviceable one to another, and to the whole body. Thus, these brethren, receiving of the same spirit from their head, Christ, are most strongly bent to the good of one another. If there be but a thorn in the foot, the back boweth, the head stoops down, the eyes look, the hands reach to it, and endeavour its help and ease: in a word, all the members partake of the good and evil, one of another. Now, by how much this body is more spiritual and lively, so much the stronger must the union and love of the parts of it be each to every other. You are brethren by the same new birth, and born to the same inheritance, and such an one as shall not be an apple of strife amongst you, to beget debates

and contentions: no, it is enough for all, and none shall prejudge another, but you shall have joy in the happiness one of another; seeing you shall then be perfect in love, all harmony, no difference in judgment or in affection, all your harps tuned to the same new song, which you shall sing for ever. Let that love begin here, which shall never end.

And this same union, I conceive, is likewise expressed in the first words of the verse. Seeing you are partakers of that work of sanctification by the same word, and the same Spirit that works it in all the faithful, and are by that called and incorporated into that fraternity, therefore live in it and like it. You are purified to it; therefore love one another after that same manner purely. Let the profane world scoff at that name of *brethren;* you will not be so foolish as to be scorned out of it, being so honourable and happy; and the day is at hand wherein those that scoff you would give much more than all that the best of them ever possessed in the world, to be admitted into your number.

Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.] Here is, 1. The chief seat, or subject of the work of sanctification, *the soul.* 2. The subordinate means, *truth.* 3. The nature of it, *obeying of truth.* 4. The chief worker of it, *the Holy Spirit.*

For the *first,* the chief seat of sanctification, *the soul:* it is no doubt a work that goes through the whole man, renews and purifies all. (Heb. x. 22; 2 Cor. vii. 1.) But because it purifies the soul, therefore it is that it does purify all. There impurity begins, (Matth. xv. 18;) not only evil thoughts, but all evil actions come forth from the heart, which is there all one with the soul; and therefore this purifying begins there, *makes the tree good that the fruit may be good.* It is not so much external performances that make the difference between men, as their inward temper. We meet here in the same place, and all partake of the same word and prayer; but how wide a difference is there, in God's eye, betwixt an unwashed profane

heart in the same exercise, and a soul purified in some measure *in obeying the truth*, and desirous to be further purified by further obeying it!

Secondly, That which is the subordinate means of this purity, is, *The Truth*, or the word of God. It is truth, pure in itself, and it begets truth and purity in the heart, by teaching it concerning the holy and pure nature of God, shewing it and his holy will, which is to us the rule of purity; and by representing Jesus Christ unto us as the fountain of our purity and renovation, from whose fulness we may *receive grace for grace*. (John i. 16.)

Thirdly, The nature of this work, that wherein the very being of this purifying consists, is, *the receiving, or obeying of this truth*. So Gal. iii. 1, where it is put for right believing. The chief point of obedience is believing; the proper obedience to truth, is, to give credit to it; and this divine belief doth necessarily bring the whole soul into obedience and conformity to that pure truth which is in the word; and so the very purifying and renewing of the soul, is this obedience of faith, as unbelief is its chief impurity and disobedience; therefore, (Acts xv. 9,) Faith is said to *purify the heart*.

Fourthly, The chief worker of this sanctification, is, *the Holy Spirit of God*. They are said here to *purify themselves*, for it is certain and undeniable, that the soul itself doth act in believing or obeying the truth; but not of itself, it is not the first principle of motion. They purify their souls, but it is *by the Spirit*. They do it by His enlivening power, and a purifying virtue received from Him. Faith, or obeying the truth, works this purity, but the Holy Ghost works that faith: as in the fore-cited place, God is said to *purify their hearts by faith*, ver. 8. He doth that by giving them the Holy Ghost. The truth is pure, and purifying, yet can it not of itself purify the soul, but by the obeying or believing of it; and the soul cannot obey or believe but by the Spirit which works in it that faith, and by that faith purifies it, and works love in it. The

impurity and earthliness of men's minds, is the great cause of disunion and disaffection amongst them, and of all their strifes. (James iv. 1.)

This Spirit is that fire which refines and purifies the soul from the dross of earthly desires that possess it, and which sublimates it to the love of God, and of his Saints, because they are his and are purified by the same Spirit. It is the property of fire to draw together things of the same kind: the outward fire of enmities and persecution that are kindled against the godly by the world, doth somewhat, and, if it were more considered by them, would do more, in this knitting their hearts closer one to another; but it is this inward pure and purifying fire of the Holy Ghost, that doth most powerfully unite them.

The true reason why there is so little truth of this Christian mutual love amongst those that are called Christians, is, because there is so little of this purifying obedience to the truth whence it flows. Faith unfeigned would beget this love unfeigned. Men may exhort to them both, but they require the hand of God to work them in the heart.

Ver. 23. Being born again, not of corruptible seed: but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

THE two things which make up the Apostle's exhortation, are the very sum of a Christian's duty; to walk as obedient children towards God, and as loving brethren one towards another: and that it may yet have the deeper impression, he here represents to them anew that new birth he mentioned before, by which they are the children of God, and so brethren.

We shall first speak of this Regeneration; and then of the Seed. 1*st*, Of the regeneration itself. This is the great dignity of believers, that they are the sons of God, (John i. 12,) as it is the great evidence of the love of God, that He hath bestowed this dignity on them. (1 John iii. 1.) For they are no way needful to Him: He had from eternity a Son perfectly like Himself, *the character of His person*, (Heb. i. 3,) and one Spirit proceeding from both; and there is no creation, neither

the first nor the second, can add any thing to Those and Their happiness. It is most true of that Blessed Trinity, *Satis amplum alter alteri theatrum sumus.* But the gracious purpose of God to impart His goodness, appears in this, that He hath made himself such a multitude of sons, not only angels that are so called, but man, a little lower than they in nature, yet dignified with this name in his creation: (Luke iii. 38,) *Which was the Son of Adam, which was the Son of God.* He had not only the impression of God's footsteps, (as they speak) which all the creatures have, but of His image. And most of all in this is His rich grace magnified, that sin having defaced that image, and so degraded man from his honour, and divested him of that title of sonship, and stamped our polluted nature with the marks of vileness and bondage, yea, with the very image of Satan, rebellion and enmity against God; that out of mankind thus ruined and degenerated, God should raise to himself a new race and generation of sons.

For this design was the *Word made flesh,* (John i. 12,) the Son made man, to make men the sons of God. And it is by him alone we are restored to this; they who receive him, receive with him, and in him, this privilege, *v.* 12. And therefore it is a sonship by adoption, and is so called in Scripture, in difference from his eternal and ineffable generation, who is, and was, *the only begotten Son of God.* Yet, that we may know that this Divine adoption is not a mere outward relative name, as that of men, the sonship of the Saints is here, and often elsewhere in Scripture, expressed by *new generation,* and *new birth.* They are *begotten of God.* (John i. 13; 1 John ii. 29.) A new being, a spiritual life, is communicated to them; they have in them of their Father's Spirit; and this is derived to them through Christ, and therefore called his Spirit. (Gal. iv. 6.) They are not only accounted of the family of God by adoption, but by this new birth they are indeed his children, partakers of the Divine nature, as our Apostle expresseth it.

Now though it be easy to speak and hear the words of this

doctrine, yet the truth itself that is in it, is so high and mysterious, that it is altogether impossible, without a portion of this new nature, to conceive of it. Corrupt nature cannot understand it. What wonder that there is nothing of it in the subtilest schools of philosophers, when a very *doctor in Israel* mistook it grossly? (John iii. 10.) It is indeed a great mystery, and he that was the sublimest of all the Evangelists, and therefore called the divine, the soaring eagle, (as they compare him,) he is more abundant in this subject than the rest.

And the most profitable way of considering this regeneration and sonship, is certainly to follow the light of those holy writings, and not to jangle in disputes about the order and manner of it, of which though somewhat may be profitably said, and safely, namely, so much as the Scripture speaks, yet much that is spoken of it, and debated by many, is but an useless expense of time and pains. What those previous dispositions are, and how far they go, and where is the mark or point of difference betwixt them and the infusion of spiritual life, I conceive not so easily determinable.

If naturalists and physicians cannot agree upon the order of formation of the parts of the human body in the womb, how much less can we be peremptory in the other! If there be so many wonders (as indeed there be) in the natural structure and frame of man, how much richer in wonders must this Divine and supernatural generation be! See how David speaks of the former. (Psal. xiv. 15.) Things spiritual being more refined than material things, their workmanship must be far more wonderful and curious. But then, it must be viewed with a spiritual eye. There is an unspeakable lustre and beauty of the new creature, by the mixture of all Divine graces, each setting off another, as so many rich several colours in embroidery; but who can trace that Invisible Hand that works it, so as to determine of the order, and to say which was first, which second, and so on; whether faith, or repentance, and all graces, *&c.!* This is certain, that these and all graces

do inseparably make up the same work, and are all in the new formation of every soul that is born again.

If the ways of God's universal providence be untraceable, then, most of all, the workings of His grace are conducted in a secret unperceivable way in this new birth. He gives this spiritual being as the dew, which is silently and insensibly formed, and this generation of the Sons of God is compared to it by the Psalmist (Psal. cx. 3): they have this original from Heaven as the dew. *Except a man be born from above, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* (John iii. 3.) And it is the peculiar work of the Spirit of God; as He himself speaks of the dew to Job, (Job xxxviii. 28,) *Hath the rain a father, or who hath begotten the drops of the dew?* The sharpest wits are to seek in the knowledge and discovery of it, as Job speaketh of a way that no fowl knoweth, and *which the vulture's eye hath not seen.* (Ch. xxviii. ver. 7.)

To contest much, how in this regeneration He works upon the will, and renews it, is to little purpose, provided this be granted, that it is in His power to regenerate and renew a man at his pleasure: and how is it possible not to grant this, unless we will run into that error, to think that God hath made a creature too hard for himself to rule, or hath willingly exempted it? And shall the works of the Almighty, especially this work, wherein most of all others He glories, fail in His hand and remain imperfect? Shall there be any abortive births whereof God is the Father? *Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth?* (Isa. lxvi. 9.) No; no sinner so dead, but there is virtue in His hand to revive out of the very stones. Though the most impenitent hearts are as stones within them, yet He *can make of them children to Abraham.* (Luke iii. 8.) He can dig out *the heart of stone, and put a heart of flesh* in its place (Ezek. xxvi. 26); otherwise, He would not have made such a promise. *Not of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* (John i. 13.) If His sovereign will is not a sufficient principle of this regeneration, why then

says the Apostle St. James, *Of his own will begat he us?* And he adds the subordinate cause, *By the word of truth*, (James i. 18,) which is here called the immortal seed of this new birth.

Therefore it is that the Lord hath appointed the continuance of the ministry of this word, to the end that his church may be still fruitful, bringing forth sons unto him; that the assemblies of his people may be like *flocks of sheep coming up from the washing, none barren amongst them.* (Cant. iv. 2.)

Though the ministers of this word, by reason of their employment in dispensing it, have, by the Scriptures, the relation of parents imparted to them; (which is an exceeding great dignity for them, as they are called *co-workers* with God; and the same apostle that writes so, calls the Galatians his *little children, of whom he travailed in birth again till Christ were formed in them;* and the ministers of God have often very much pain in this travail;) yet, the privilege of the Father of Spirits remains untouched, which is, effectually to beget again those same spirits which he creates, and to make that seed of the word fruitful in the way and at the season that it may please Him. The preacher of the word, be he never so powerful, can cast this seed only into the ear; his hand reaches no further; and the hearer, by his attention, may convey it into his head; but it is the supreme Father and Teacher above who carries it into the heart, the only soil wherein it proves lively and fruitful. One man cannot reach the heart of another; how should he then renew its fruitfulness? If natural births have been always acknowledged to belong to God's prerogative, (Psal. cxxvii. 3, *Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward;* and so Jacob answered wisely to his wife's foolish passion, Gen. xxx. 2, *Am I in God's stead?*) how much more is this new birth wholly dependent on His hand!

But though this word cannot beget without Him, yet it is by this word that He begets, and ordinarily not without it. It is true that the substantial Eternal Word is to us (as we said)

the spring of this new birth and life, the head from whom the spirits of this supernatural life flow; but that by *the word* here, is meant the Gospel, the Apostle puts out of doubt, verse the last, *And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.* Therefore thus is this word really the seed of this new birth, because it contains and declares that Other Word, the Son of God, as our life. The word is spoken in common, and so is the same to all hearers; but then, all hearts being naturally shut against it, God doth by his own hand open some to receive it, and mixes it with faith; and those it renews, and restoreth in them the image of God, draws the traces of it anew, and makes them the Sons of God. *My doctrine shall drop as the dew*, says Moses. (Deut. xxxii. 2.) The word, as a heavenly dew, not falling beside, but dropped into the heart by the hand of God's own Spirit, makes it all become spiritual and heavenly, and turns it into one of those drops of dew that the children of God are compared to, (Psal. cx. 3,) *Thou hast the dew of thy youth.*

The natural estate of the soul is darkness, and the word as a Divine light shining into it, transforms the soul into its own nature; so that as the word is called light, so is the soul that is renewed by it. *Ye were darkness, but now are ye*, not only enlightened, but *light in the Lord.* (Eph. v. 8.) All the evils of the natural mind are often comprised under the name of darkness and error, and therefore is the whole work of conversion likewise signified by light and truth: *He begat us by the word of truth.* (Jam. i. 18: so 2 Cor. iv. 16, alluding to the first *Fiat Lux*, or *Let there be light*, in the creation.) The word brought within the soul by the Spirit, lets it see its own necessity and Christ's sufficiency, convinceth it thoroughly, and causeth it to cast over itself upon him for life; and this is the very begetting of it again to eternal life.

So that this efficacy of the word to prove successful seed, doth not hang upon the different abilities of the preachers, their having more or less rhetoric or learning. It is true, eloquence hath a great advantage in civil and moral things, to

persuade, and to draw the hearers by the ears, almost which way it will; but in this spiritual work, to revive a soul, to beget it anew, the influence of Heaven is the main thing requisite. There is no way so common and plain, (being warranted by God in the delivery of saving truth,) but the Spirit of God can revive the soul by it; and the most skilful and authoritative way, yea, being withal very spiritual, yet may effect nothing, because left alone to itself. One word of holy Scripture, or of truth conformable to it, may be the principle of regeneration, to him that hath heard multitudes of excellent sermons, and hath often read the whole Bible, and hath still continued unchanged. If the Spirit of God preach that one or any such word to the soul, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, (John iii. 15,) it will be cast down with the fear of perishing, and driven out of itself by that, and raised up and drawn to Jesus Christ by the hope of everlasting life; it will believe on him that it may have life, and be inflamed with the love of God, and give itself to Him who so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son to purchase for us that everlasting life. Thus may that word prove this immortal seed, which, though very often read and heard before, was but a dead letter. A drop of those liquors which are called spirits operates more than large draughts of other waters; one word spoken by the Lord to the heart is all spirit, and doth that which whole streams of man's eloquence could never effect.

In hearing of the word, men look usually too much upon men, and forget from what spring the word hath its power; they observe too narrowly the different hand of the sowers, and too little depend on His hand, who is great Lord of both seed-time and harvest. Be it sown by a weak hand, or a stronger, the immortal seed is still the same; yea, suppose the worst, that it be a foul hand that sows it, that the preacher himself be not so sanctified and of so edifying a life as you would wish, yet, the seed itself, being good, contracts no de-

filement, and may be effectual to regeneration in some, and to the strengthening of others; although he that is not renewed by it himself, cannot have much hope of success, nor reap much comfort by it, and usually doth not seek nor regard it much; but all instruments are alike in an Almighty hand.

Hence learn, 1. That true conversion is not so slight a work as we commonly account it. It is not the outward change of some bad customs, which gains the name of a reformed man, in the ordinary dialect; it is a new birth and being, and elsewhere called *a new creation.* Though it be but a change in qualities, yet it is such a one, and the qualities are so far different, that it bears the name of the most substantial productions: from *children of disobedience*, and that which is linked with it, *heirs of wrath*, to be *sons of God and heirs of glory!* They have a new spirit given them, a free, princely, noble spirit, as the word is, (Psal. li. 10,) and this spirit acts in their life and actions.

2. Consider this dignity, and be kindled with an ambition worthy of it. How doth a Christian pity that poor vanity which men make so much noise about, of their kindred and extraction! This is worth glorying in indeed, to be of the highest blood-royal, sons of the King of kings by this new birth, and in the nearest relation to Him! This adds matchless honour to that birth which is so honourable in the esteem of the world.

But we all pretend to be of this number. Would we not study to cozen ourselves, the discovery whether we are, or not, would not be so hard.

In many, their false confidence is too evident; there is no appearance in them of the Spirit of God, not a footstep like His leading, nor any trace of that character, (Rom. viii. 14,) *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God;* not a lineament of God's visage, as their Father. *If ye know that He is righteous*, (says St. John, ch. ii. ver. 29,) *ye know then that every one that doth righteousness is born of Him* And so, on the other hand, how contrary to the most

holy God, the lover and fountain of holiness, are they who swinishly love to wallow in the mire of unholiness! Is swearing and cursing the accent of the regenerate, the children of God? No; it is the language of hell. Do children delight to indignify and dishonour their father's name? No; earthly-mindedness is a countersign. Shall the king's children, *they that were brought up in scarlet*, (as Jeremiah laments) *embrace the dunghill?* (Lam. iv. 5.) Princes, by their high birth and education, have usually their hearts filled with far higher thoughts than mean persons: the children of the poorest sort being pinched that way, their greatest thoughts, as they grow up, are, ordinarily, how they shall shift to live, how they shall get bread; but princes think either of the conquest or governing of kingdoms. Are you not born to a better inheritance, if, indeed, you are born again: why, then, do you vilify yourselves? Why are you not more in prayer? There are no dumb children among those that are born of God; they have all that Spirit of prayer by which they not only speak, but *cry, Abba, Father.*

2dly. We come to consider the seed of this regeneration, *the word of God.* The most part of us esteem the preaching of the word, as a transient discourse that amuses us for an hour. We look for no more, and therefore we find no more. We receive it not as the immortal seed of our regeneration, as *the ingrafted word that is able to save our souls* (Jam. i. 21). Oh! learn to reverence this holy and happy ordinance of God, this word of life, and know, that they who are not regenerated, and so saved by it, shall be judged by it.

Not of corruptible seed.] It is a main cause of the unsuitable and unworthy behaviour of Christians, (those that profess themselves such,) that a great part of them either do not know, or at least do not seriously and frequently consider, what is indeed the estate and quality of Christians, how excellent and of what descent their new nature is; therefore they are often to be reminded of this. Our Apostle here doth so, and by it binds on all his exhortations.

Of this new being we have here these two things specified: 1. Its high original from God, *Begotten again of His word:* 2. That which so much commends good things, its duration. And this follows from the other; for if the principle of this be *incorruptible*, itself must be so too. The word of God is not only a living and ever-abiding word in itself, but likewise in reference to this new birth and spiritual life of a Christian; and in this sense that which is here spoken of it is intended: it is therefore called, not only an abiding word, but *incorruptible seed*, which expressly relates to regeneration. And because we are most sensible of the good and evil of things by comparison, the everlastingness of the word and of that spiritual life which it begets, is set off by the frailty and shortness of natural life, and of all the good that concerns it. This the Apostle expresseth in the words of Isaiah, in the next verse.

Ver. 24. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.

In expressing the vanity and frailty of the natural life of man, it agrees very well with the subject to call him *flesh*, giving to the whole man the name of his corruptible part, both to make the wretched and perishing condition of this life more sensible, and man the more humble by it: for though by providing all for the flesh, and bestowing his whole time in the endeavours which are of the flesh's concernment, he remembers it too much, and forgets his spiritual and immortal part; yet in that over-eager care for the flesh, he seems, in some sense, to forget that he is flesh, or, at least, that flesh is perishing because flesh; extending his desires and projects so far for the flesh, as if it were immortal, and should always abide to enjoy and use these things. As the philosopher said of his countrymen, upbraiding at once their surfeitings and excess in feasting, and their sumptuousness in building, "That they ate as if they meant to die to-morrow, and yet built as if they were never to die;" thus, in men's immoderate pursuits of earth, they seem both to forget they are any thing else beside flesh,

and, in this sense too, to forget that they are flesh, that is, mortal and perishing; they rightly remember neither their immortality nor their mortality. If we consider what it is to be flesh, the naming of that were sufficient to the purpose: All man is flesh; but it is plainer thus, *All flesh is grass.* Thus, in the lxxviiith Psalm, *He remembered that they were but flesh:* that speaks their frailty enough; but it is added, to make the vanity of their estate the clearer—*a wind that passeth and cometh not again.* So Psal. ciii. 15. *As for man, his days are as grass, as a flower of the field so he flourisheh. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

This natural life is compared, even by natural men, to the vainest things, and scarcely find they things light enough to express its *vanity;* as it is here called *grass,* so they have compared the generations of men to the leaves of trees. But the light of Scripture doth most discover this, and it is a lesson that requires the Spirit of God to teach it aright. *Teach us,* says Moses, (Psal. xc. 12,) *so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* And David, (Psal. xxxix. 4,) *Make me to know my life, how frail I am.* So James, (iv. 14,) *What is your life! it is even a vapour.* And here it is called *grass.* So Job, (xiv. 1, 2,) *Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down.*

Grass hath its root in the earth, and is fed by the moisture of it for a while; but besides that, it is under the hazard of such weather as favours it not, or of the scythe that cuts it down; give it all the forbearance that may be, let it be free from both those, yet how quickly will it wither of itself! Set aside those many accidents, the smallest of which is able to destroy our natural life, the diseases of our own bodies, and outward violences, and casualties that cut down many in their greenness, in the flower of their youth, the utmost term is not long; in the course of nature it will wither. Our life is indeed a lighted torch

either blown out by some stroke or some wind, or, if spared, yet within a while it burns away, and will die out of itself.

And all the glory of man.] This is elegantly added. There is indeed a great deal of seeming difference betwixt the outward conditions of life amongst men. Shall the rich, and honourable, and beautiful, and healthful go in together, under the same name, with the baser and unhappier part, the poor, wretched sort of the world, who seem to be born for nothing but sufferings and miseries? At least, hath the wise no advantage beyond the fools? Is all grass? Make you no distinction? No; *all is grass*, or if you will have some other name, be it so: once, this is true, that all flesh is grass; and if that glory which shines so much in your eyes, must have a difference, then this is all it can have,—it is but *the flower* of that same grass; somewhat above the common grass in gayness, a little comelier, and better apparelled than it, but partaker of its frail and fading nature; it hath no privilege nor immunity that way, yea, of the two, is the less durable, and usually shorter lived; at the best it decays with it: *The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.*

How easily and quickly hath the highest splendour of a man's prosperity been blasted, either by men's power, or by the immediate hand of God! The Spirit of the Lord blows upon it, (as Isaiah there says,) and by that, not only withers the grass, but the flower fades though never so fair. *When thou correctest man for iniquity*, says David, *thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.* (Psal. xxxix. 11.) How many have the casualties of fire, or war, or shipwreck, in one day, or in one night, or in a small part of either, turned out of great riches into extreme poverty! And the instances are not few, of those who have on a sudden fallen from the top of honour into the foulest disgraces, not by degrees coming down the stair they went up, but tumbled down headlong. And the most vigorous beauty and strength of body, how doth a few days' sickness, or if it escape that, a few years' time, blast that

flower! Yea, those higher advantages which have somewhat both of truer and more lasting beauty in them, the endowments of wit, and learning, and eloquence, yea, and of moral goodness and virtue, yet they cannot rise above this word; they are still, in all their glory, but the *flower of grass;* their root is in the earth. Natural ornaments are of some use in this present life, but they reach no further. When men have wasted their strength, and endured the toil of study night and day, it is but a small parcel of knowledge they can attain to, and they are forced to lie down in the dust in the midst of their pursuit of it: that head that lodges most sciences, shall within a while be disfurnished of them all; and the tongue that speaks most languages be silenced.

The great projects of kings and princes, and they also themselves, come under this same notion; all the vast designs that are framing in their heads, fall to the ground in a moment; *They return to their dust, and in that day all their thoughts perish.* (Psal. cxlvi. 4.) Archimedes was killed in the midst of his demonstration.

If they themselves did consider this in the heat of their affairs, it would much allay the swelling and loftiness of their minds; and if they who live upon their favour would consider it, they would not value it at so high a rate, and buy it so dear as often they do. *Men of low degree are vanity,* says the Psalmist, (Psal. lxii. 9,) but he adds, *Men of high degree are a lie.* From base, mean persons we expect nothing; but the estate of great persons promises fair, and often keeps not; therefore they are a lie, although they can least endure that word.

They are, in respect of mean persons, as the flower to the grass; a somewhat fairer lustre they have, but no more endurance, nor exemption from decaying. Thus, then, it is an universal and undeniable truth: it begins here with διότι, and is as sure a conclusion as the surest of those in their best demonstrations, which they call διότι. And as particular men, so whole states and kingdoms have thus their budding, flourishing, and withering, and it is in both as with flowers—when they are

fulless spread, then they are near their declining and withering. And thus it is with all whole generations of men upon earth: as Solomon says, *One goeth and another cometh* (Eccl. i. 4); but not a word of abiding at all. We, in our thoughts, shut up death into a very narrow compass, namely, into the moment of our expiring; but the truth is, as the moralist observes, it goes through all our life: for we are still losing and spending life as we enjoy it, yea, our very enjoying of it is the spending of it. Yesterday's life is dead to-day, and so shall this day's life be to-morrow. *We spend our years*, says Moses, *as a tale*, (Psal. xc. 8,) or as a thought, so swift and vanishing is it. Every word helps a tale towards its end; while it lasts, it is generally vanity, and when it is done, it vanishes as a sound in the air. What is become of all the pompous solemnities of kings and princes at their births and marriages, coronations and triumphs? They are now as a dream; as St. Luke (Acts xxv. 23) calls the pomp of Agrippa and Bernice, φαντασία, a mere phantasy.

Hence, learn the folly and pride of man who can glory and please himself in the frail and wretched being he hath here, who doats on this poor natural life, and cannot be persuaded to think on one higher and more abiding, although the course of time, and his daily experience tell him this truth, that *all flesh is grass*. Yea, the Prophet prefixes to these words a command of crying; they must be shouted aloud in our ears, ere we will hear them, and by that time the sound of the cry is done, we have forgotten it again. Would we consider this, in the midst of those vanities that toss our light minds to and fro, it would give us wiser thoughts, and ballast our hearts; make them more solid and steadfast in those spiritual endeavours which concern a durable condition, a being that abides for ever; in comparison of which, the longest term of natural life is less than a moment, and the happiest estate of it but a heap of miseries. Were all of us more constantly prosperous than any one of us is, yet that one thing were enough to cry down the price we put upon this life, that it continues not. As he answered to one

who had a mind to flatter him in the midst of a pompous triumph, by saying, What is wanting here? *Continuance*, said he. It was wisely said at any time, but wisest of all, to have so sober a thought in such a solemnity, in which weak heads cannot escape either to be wholly drunk, or somewhat giddy at least. Surely we forget this, when we grow vain upon any human glory or advantage; the colour of it pleases us, and we forget that it is but a flower, and foolishly over-esteem it. This is like that madness upon flowers, which is somewhere prevalent, where they will give as much for one flower, as would buy a good dwelling-house. Is it not a most foolish bargain, to bestow continual pains and diligence upon the purchasing of great possessions or honours, if we believe this, that the best of them is no other than a short-lived flower, and to neglect the purchase of those glorious mansions of eternity, a garland of such flowers as wither not, an unfading crown, that everlasting life, and those everlasting pleasures that are at the right hand of God?

Now, that life which shall never end must begin here; it is the new spiritual life, whereof the word of God is the immortal seed; and in opposition to corruptible seed and the corruptible life of flesh, it is here said to endure for ever. And for this end is the frailty of natural life mentioned, that our affections may be drawn off from it to this spiritual life, which is not subject unto death.

Ver. 25. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.

THE word of God is so like Himself, and carries so plainly the image and impression of his power and wisdom, that where they are spoken of together, it is sometimes doubtful whether the expressions are to be referred to Himself, or to His word: (as Heb. iv. 12; and so here:) but there is no hazard in referring them either way, seeing there is truth in both, and pertinency too; for they who refer them to God, affirm that they are intended for the extolling of His word, being the subject

in hand, and that we may know it to be like Him. But I rather think here, that the Apostle speaks of the word; it is said to be quick or living (ζῶν) in the fore-cited text, as well as in the passage before us; and the phrase, *abiding for ever,* is expressly repeated of it here, in the Prophet's words. And (with respect to those learned men that apply them to God) I remember not that this *abiding for ever* is used to express God's eternity in Himself. Howsoever, this incorruptible seed is the living and everlasting word of the living and everlasting God, and is therefore such, because He, whose it is, is such.

Now, this is not to be taken in an abstract sense of the word, only in its nature, but as the principle of regeneration, the seed of this new life; because the word is enlivening and living, therefore they with whom it is effectual, and into whose hearts it is received, are begotten again and made alive by it; and because the word is incorruptible, and endureth for ever, therefore that life begotten by it is such too, cannot perish or be cut down, as the natural life; no, this spiritual life of grace is the certain beginning of that eternal life of glory, and shall issue in it, and therefore hath no end.

As the word of God in itself cannot be abolished, but surpasses the permanence of heaven and earth, as our Saviour teaches; and all the attempts of men against the Divine truth of that word to undo it, are as vain as if they should consult to pluck the sun out of the firmament; so, likewise, in the heart of a Christian, it is immortal and incorruptible. Where it is once received by faith, it cannot be obliterated again: all the powers of darkness cannot destroy it, although they be never so diligent in their attempts that way. And this is the comfort of the Saints, that though the life, which God by His word hath breathed into their souls, have many and strong enemies, such as they themselves could never hold out against, yet for His own glory, and His promise sake, He will maintain that life, and bring it to its perfection: *God will perfect that which concerneth me,* saith the Psalmist (Psal. cxxxviii. 8.) It is grossly contrary to the truth of the Scriptures to imagine,

that they who are thus renewed can be unborn again. This new birth is but once, of one kind; though they are subject to frailties and weaknesses here in this spiritual life, yet not to death any more, nor to such way of sinning as would extinguish this life. This is that which the Apostle John says, *He that is born of God sinneth not;* and the reason he adds, is the same that is here given, the permanence and incorruptibleness of this word, *The seed of God abideth in him.* (John iii. 9.)

This is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.] It is not sufficient to have these thoughts of the word of God in a general way, and not to know what that word is; but we must be persuaded, that that word which is *preached to us* is this very word of so excellent virtue, and of which these high things are spoken; that it is *incorruptible* and *abideth for ever*, and therefore surpasses all the world, and all the excellencies and glory of it. Although delivered by weak men—the apostles, and by far weaker than they in the constant ministry of it, yet it loseth none of its own virtue; for that depends upon the first Owner and Author of it, the ever-living GOD, who by it begets his chosen unto life eternal.

This, therefore, is that which we should learn thus to hear, and thus to receive, esteem, and love, this holy, this living word; to despise all the glittering vanities of this perishing life, all outward pomp, yea, all inward worth, all wisdom and natural endowments of mind, in comparison of the heavenly light of the Gospel preached unto us: rather to hazard all than lose that, and banish all other things from the place that is due to it; to lodge it alone in our hearts, as our only treasure here, and the certain pledge of that treasure of glory laid up for us in heaven. To which blessed state may God of his infinite mercy bring us! *Amen.*

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1. Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

Ver. 2. As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.

The same power and goodness of God that manifests itself in giving being to His creatures, appears likewise in sustaining and preserving them. To give being is the first, and to support it is the continued effect of that power and goodness. Thus it is both in the first creation, and in the second. In the first, the creatures to which He gave life, He provided with convenient nourishment to uphold that life (Gen. i. 11): so here, in the close of the former chapter, we find the doctrine of the new birth and life of a Christian, and in the beginning of this, the proper food of that life. And it is the same word by which we there find it to be begotten, that is here the nourishment of it; and therefore Christians are here exhorted by the Apostle so to esteem and so to use it; and that is the main scope of the words.

Observe in general: The word, the principle, and the support of our spiritual being, is both the *incorruptible seed* and the *incorruptible food* of that new life of grace, which must therefore be an incorruptible life; and this may convince us, that the ordinary thoughts, even of us who hear this word, are far below the true excellency and worth of it. The stream of custom and our profession bring us hither, and we sit out our hour under the sound of this word; but how few consider and prize it as the great ordinance of God for the salvation of souls, the beginner and the sustainer of the Divine life of grace within us! And certainly, until we have these thoughts of it, and seek to feel it thus ourselves, although we hear it most frequently, and let slip no occasion, yea, hear it with attention and some present delight, yet still we miss the right use of it, and turn it from its true end, while we take it not as *that ingrafted word which is able to save our souls.* (James i. 21.)

Thus ought they who preach to speak it—to endeavour their utmost to accommodate it to this end, that sinners may be converted, begotten again, and believers nourished and strengthened in their spiritual life—to regard no lower end, but aim steadily at that mark. Their hearts and tongues ought to be set on fire with holy zeal for God and love to souls, kindled by the Holy Ghost, that came down on the apostles in the shape of fiery tongues.

And those that ear should remember this as the end of their hearing, that they may receive spiritual life and strength by the word. For though it seems a poor despicable business, that a frail sinful man like yourselves should speak a few words in your hearing, yet, look upon it as the way wherein God communicates happiness to those who believe, and works that believing unto happiness, alters the whole frame of the soul, and makes a new creation, as it begets it again to the inheritance of glory. Consider it thus, which is its true notion; and then, what can be so precious? Let the world disesteem it as they will, know ye, that *it is the power of God unto salvation. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto them that are saved, it is the power of God,* says the Apostle (1 Cor. i. 18). And if you would have the experience of this, if you would have life and growth by it, you must look above the poor worthless messenger, and call in His almighty help who is the Lord of life. As the philosophers affirm, that if the heavens should stand still, there would be no generation or flourishing of any thing here below, so it is the moving and influence of the Spirit that makes the Church fruitful. Would you but do this before you come here, present the blindness of your minds and the deadness of your hearts to God, and say, "Lord, here is an opportunity for thee to shew the power of "thy word. I would find life and strength in it; but neither "can I who hear, nor he that speaks, make it thus unto me; "that is thy prerogative; say Thou the word, and it shall be "done." *God said let there be light and it was light.*

In this exhortation to the due use of the word, the Apostle

continues the resemblance of that new birth he mentioned in the preceding chapter.

As new-born babes.] Be not satisfied with yourselves, till you find some evidence of this new, this supernatural life. There be delights and comforts in this life in its lowest condition, that would persuade us to look after it, if we knew them; but as the most cannot be made sensible of these, consider therefore the end of it. Better never to have been, than not to have been partaker of this new being. *Except a man be born again*, says our Saviour, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* (John iii. 3.) Surely they that are not born again, shall one day wish they had never been born. What a poor wretched thing is the life that we have here! a very heap of follies and miseries! Now if we would share in a happier being after it, in that life which ends not, it must begin here. Grace and glory are one and the same life, only with this difference, that the one is the beginning, and the other the perfection of it; or if we do call them two several lives, yet the one is the undoubted pledge of the other. It was a strange word for a heathen to say, that that day of death we fear so, *æterni natalis est, is the birth-day of eternity*. Thus it is indeed, to those who are here born again: this new-birth of grace is the sure earnest and pledge of that birth-day of glory. Why do we not then labour to make this certain by the former? Is it not a fearful thing to spend our days in vanity, and then lie down in darkness and sorrow for ever; to disregard the life of our soul, while we may and should be provident for it, and then, when it is going out, cry, *Quò nunc abibis?* Whither art thou going, O my soul?

But this new life puts us out of the danger and fear of that eternal death. *We are passed from death to life*, says St. John, (1 John iii. 14,) speaking of those who are born again; and being passed, there is no re-passing, no going back from this life to death again.

This new birth is the same that St. John calls the *first resurrection*, and he pronounces them blessed who partake of it:

Blessed are they that have part in the first resurrection; the second death shall have no power over them. (Rev. xx. 6.)

The weak beginnings of grace, weak in comparison of the further strength attainable even in this life, are sometimes expressed as the infancy of it; and so believers ought not to continue infants; if they do, it is reprovable in them (as we see Eph. iv. 14; 1 Cor. ii. 2; 1 Cor. xiv. 20; Heb. v. 12.) Though the Apostle writes to new converts, and so may possibly imply the tenderness of their beginnings of grace, yet I conceive that infancy is here to be taken in such a sense as agrees to a Christian in the whole course and best estate of his spiritual life here below. So, likewise, the *milk* here recommended is answerable to infancy, taken in this sense, and not in the former; (as it is in some of those cited places, where it means the easiest and first principles of religion, and so is opposed to the higher mysteries of it, as to strong meat;) but here it signifies the whole word of God, and all its wholesome and saving truths, as the proper nourishment of the children of God. And so the Apostle's words are a standing exhortation for all Christians of all degrees.

And the whole estate and course of their spiritual life here is called their *infancy*, not only as opposed to the corruption and wickedness of the old man, but likewise as signifying the weakness and imperfection of it, at its best in this life, compared with the perfection of the life to come; for the weakest beginnings of grace are by no means so far below the highest degree of it possible in this life, as that highest degree falls short of the state of glory: so that, if one measure of grace is called infancy in respect of another, much more is all grace infancy in respect of glory. And surely, as for duration, the time of our present life is far less compared to eternity, than the time of our natural infancy is to the rest of our life; so that we may be still called but *new or lately born.* Our best pace and strongest walking in obedience here, is but as the stepping of children when they begin to go by hold, in comparison of the perfect obedience in glory, when *we shall follow the Lamb whereso-ever he goes.* All our knowledge here, is but as the ignorance

of infants, and all our expressions of God and of his praises, but as the first stammerings of children in comparison of the knowledge we shall have of him hereafter, when *we shall know as we are known*, and of the praises we shall then offer Him, when that new song shall be taught us. A child hath in it a reasonable soul, and yet, by the indisposedness of the body, and abundance of moisture, it is so bound up, that its difference from the beasts in partaking of a rational life is not so apparent as afterwards; and thus the spiritual life that is from above infused into a Christian, though it doth act and work in some degree, yet it is so clogged with the natural corruption still remaining in him, that the excellency of it is much clouded and obscured; but in the life to come, it shall have nothing at all incumbering and indisposing it. And this is the Apostle St. Paul's doctrine, 1 Cor. xiii. 9—12.

And this is the wonder of Divine grace, that brings so small beginnings to that height of perfection that we are not able to conceive of; that a little spark of true grace, which is not only indiscernible to others, but often to the Christian himself, should yet be the beginning of that condition wherein they shall shine brighter than the sun in the firmament. The difference is great in our natural life, in some persons especially; that they who in infancy were so feeble, and wrapped up as others in swadling clothes, yet afterwards come to excel in wisdom and in the knowledge of sciences, or to be commanders of great armies, or to be kings: but the distance is far greater and more admirable betwixt the weakness of these *new-born babes*, the small beginnings of grace, and our after perfection, that fulness of knowledge that we look for, and that crown of immortality which all they are born to who are born of God.

But as in the faces or actions of some children, characters and presages of their after-greatness have appeared, (as a singular beauty in Moses' face, as they write of him, and as Cyrus was made king among the shepherds' children with whom he was brought up, &c.,) so also, certainly, in these children of God, there be some characters and evidences that they are born

for Heaven by their new birth. That holiness and meekness, that patience and faith, which shine in the actions and sufferings of the saints, are characters of their Father's image, and shew their high original, and foretel their glory to come; such a glory as doth not only surpass the world's thoughts, but the thoughts of the children of God themselves. (1 John iii. 2.)

Now that the children of God may grow by the word of God, the Apostle requires these two things of them: 1. The innocency of children; 2. The appetite of children. For this expression, as I conceive, is relative not only to the desiring of *the milk of the word*, ver. 2, but to the former verse, the *putting off malice*. So, the Apostle Paul exhorts, (1 Cor. xiv. 20,) *As concerning malice, be ye children.*

Wherefore laying aside.] This imports that we are naturally prepossessed with these evils, and therefore we are exhorted to put them off. Our hearts are by nature no other than cages of those unclean birds, malice, envy, hypocrisy, &c. The Apostle sometimes names some of these evils, and sometimes others of them, but they are inseparable,—all one garment, and all comprehended under that one word, (Eph. iv. 22,) *the old man*, which the Apostle there exhorts Christians to put off: and here it is pressed as a necessary evidence of their new birth, as well as for the furtherance of their spiritual growth, that these base habits be thrown away; ragged filthy habits, unbeseeming the children of God. They are the proper marks of an unrenewed mind, the very characters of the children of Satan, for they constitute his image. He hath his names from enmity, and envy, and slandering; and he is that grand hypocrite and deceiver, who can *transform himself into an angel of light* (2 Cor. xi. 14).

So, on the contrary, the Spirit of God that dwells in His children, is the spirit of meekness, and love, and truth. That dovelike spirit which descended on our Saviour, is from him communicated to believers. It is the grossest impudence to pretend to be Christians, and yet to entertain hatred and envyings upon whatsoever occasion; for there is nothing more

frequently recommended to them by our Saviour's own doctrine, nothing more impressed upon their hearts by his Spirit, than love. Κακία may be taken generally, but I conceive it intends that which we particularly call *malice*.

Malice and envy are but two branches growing out of the same bitter root; self-love and evil-speakings are the fruit they bear. Malice is properly the procuring or wishing another's evil, envy the repining at his good; and both these vent themselves by evil-speaking. This infernal fire within, smokes and flashes out by the tongue, which, St. James says, *is set on fire of hell*, (iii. 6,) and fires all about it; censuring the actions of those they hate or envy, aggravating their failings, and detracting from their virtues, taking all things by the left ear: for (as Epictetus says) *every thing hath two handles*. The art of taking things by the better side, which charity always doth, would save much of those janglings and heart-burnings that so abound in the world. But folly and perverseness possess the hearts of the most, and therefore their discourses are usually the vent of these; *For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth must speak* (Matt. xii. 34). The unsavoury breaths of men argue their inward corruption. Where shall a man come, almost, in societies, but his ears shall be beaten with the unpleasant noise (surely it is so to a Christian mind) of one detracting and disparaging another? And yet this is extreme baseness, and the practice only of false counterfeit goodness, to make up one's own reputation out of the ruins of the good name of others. Real virtue neither needs nor can endure this dishonest shift: it can subsist of itself, and therefore ingenuously commends and acknowledges what good exists in others, and loves to hear it acknowledged; and neither readily speaks nor hears evil of any, but rather, where duty and conscience require not discovery, casts a veil upon men's failings to hide them: this is the true temper of the children of God.

These evils of *malice*, and *envy*, and *evil speakings*, and such like, are not to be dissembled by us, in ourselves, and

conveyed under better appearances, but to be cast away: not to be covered, but put off; and therefore that which is the upper garment and cloak of all other evils, the Apostle here commands us to cast that off too, namely, *hypocrisy*.

What avails it to wear this mask? A man may indeed in the sight of men act his part handsomely under it, and pass so for a time; but know we not that there is an Eye that sees through it, and a Hand that, if we will not put off this mask, will pull it off to our shame, either here in the sight of men, or, if we should escape all our life, and go fair off the stage under it, yet that there is a day appointed wherein all hypocrites shall be unveiled, and appear what they are indeed before men and angels? It is a poor thing, to be approved and applauded by men, while God condemns, to whose sentence all men must stand or fall. Oh! seek to be approved and justified by Him, and then, *who shall condemn?* (Rom. viii. 34.) It is no matter who do. How easily may we bear the mistakes and dislikes of all the world, if He declare himself well pleased with us! *It is a small thing for me to be judged of man, or man's day: he that judgeth me is the Lord*, saith the Apostle (1 Cor. iv. 3).

But these evils are here particularly to be put off, as contrary to the right and profitable receiving of the word of God; for this part of the exhortation (*Laying aside*) looks to that which follows (*Desire*, &c.), and is specially so to be considered.

There is this double task in religion: when a man enters upon it, he is not only to be taught true wisdom, but he is withal, yea, first of all, to be untaught the errors and wickedness that are deep rooted in his mind, which he hath not only learned by the corrupt conversation of the world, but brought the seeds of them into the world with him. They do indeed improve and grow by the favour of that example that is round about a man, but they are originally in our nature as it is now; they are connatural to us, besides being strengthened by continual custom, which is another nature. There is no

one comes to the school of Christ suiting the philosopher's word, *ut tabula rasa*, as blank paper, to receive his doctrine; but, on the contrary, all scribbled and blurred with such base habits as these, *malice*, *hypocrisy*, *envy*, &c.

Therefore, the first work is, to raze out these, to cleanse and purify the heart from these blots, these foul characters, that it may receive the impression of the image of God. And because it is the word of God that both begins and advances this work, and perfects the lineaments of that Divine image on the soul, therefore, to the receiving of this word aright, and to this proper effect by means of it, the conforming of the soul to Jesus Christ, which is the true growth of the spiritual life, this is pre-required, that the hearts of those who hear it be purged of these and such like impurities.

These dispositions are so opposite to the profitable receiving of the word of God, that while they possess and rule the soul, it cannot at all embrace these Divine truths; while it is filled with such guests, there is no room to entertain the word.

They cannot dwell together, by reason of their contrary nature: the word will not mix with these. The saving mixture of the word of God in the soul is what the Apostle speaks of, and he assigns the want of it as the cause of unprofitable hearing of the word, (Heb. iv. 2,) *not mixing of it with faith.* For by that the word is concocted into the nourishment of the life of grace, united to the soul, and mixed with it, by being mixed with faith, as the Apostle's expression imports: that is the proper mixture it requires. But with the qualities here mentioned it will not mix; there is a natural antipathy betwixt them, as strong as in those things in nature, that cannot be brought by any means to agree and mingle together.

Can there be any thing more contrary than the *good word of God*, as the Apostle calls it, and those *evil speakings?* than the word that is of such excellent sweetness, and the bitter words of a malignant tongue? than the word of life, and words *full of deadly poison?* For so slanders and defamings of our brethren are termed. And is not all *malice* and *envy* most

opposite to the word, that is the message of *peace* and *love*? How can the gall of *malice* and this *milk* of the word agree? Hypocrisy and guile stand in direct opposition to the name of this word, which is called the *word of truth;* and here the very words shew this contrariety, *sincere milk* and a *double, unsincere mind.*

These two are necessary conditions of good nourishment: 1*st*, That the food be good and wholesome: 2*dly*, That the inward constitution of them who use it be so too. And if this fail, the other profits not. This sincere milk is the only proper nourishment of spiritual life, and there is no defect or undue quality in it; but the greatest part of hearers are inwardly unwholesome, diseased with the evils here mentioned, and others of the like nature; and therefore, either have no kind of appetite to the word at all, but rather feed upon such trash as suits with their distemper, (as some kind of diseases incline those that have them to eat coals or lime, *&c.*) or, if they be anyways desirous to hear the word, and seem to feed on it, yet the noxious humours that abound in them make it altogether unprofitable, and they are not nourished by it. This evil of malice and envying, so ordinary among men, (and, which is most strange, amongst Christians,) like an overflowing of the gall, possesses their whole minds; so that they not only fail of being nourished by the word they hear, but are made the worse by it; their disease is fed by it, as an unwholesome stomach turns the best meat it receives into that humour that abounds in it. Do not they thus, who observe what the word says, that they may be the better enabled to discover the failings of others, and speak maliciously and uncharitably of them, and vent themselves, as is too common? *This word met well with such a one's fault, and this with another's:*—Is not this to feed these diseases of *malice, envy,* and *evil-speakings,* with this *pure milk,* and make *them* grow, instead of growing by it ourselves in grace and holiness?

Thus, likewise, the hypocrite turns all that he hears of this word, not to the inward renovation of his mind, and redress-

ing what is amiss there, but only to the composing of his outward carriage, and to enable himself to act his part better: to be cunninger in his own faculty, a more refined and expert hypocrite; not to grow more a Christian indeed, but more such in appearance only, and in the opinion of others.

Therefore it is a very needful advertisement, seeing these evils are so natural to men, and so contrary to the nature of the word of God, that they be purged out, to the end it may be profitably received. A very like exhortation to this hath the Apostle St. James, and some of the same words, but in another metaphor: Jam. i. 21, *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word.* He compares the word to a plant of excellent virtue, the very tree of life, the word that is able to save your souls; but the only soil wherein it will grow, is a heart full of meekness, a heart that is purged of those luxuriant weeds that grow so rank in it by nature; they must be plucked up and thrown out to make place for this word.

And there is such a necessity for this, that the most approved teachers of wisdom, in a human way, have required of their scholars, that to the end their minds might be capable of it, they should be purified from vice and wickedness. For this reason, the philosopher judges young men unfit hearers of moral philosophy, because of the abounding and untamedness of their passions, granting that, if those were composed and ordered, they might be admitted. And it was Socrates' custom, when any one asked him a question, seeking to be informed by him, before he would answer them, he asked them concerning their own qualities and course of life.

Now, if men require a calm and purified disposition of mind to make it capable of *their* doctrine, how much more is it suitable and necessary for learning the doctrine of God, and those deep mysteries that His word opens up! It is well expressed in that Apocryphal book of Wisdom, that *Froward thoughts separate from God, and wisdom enters not into a malicious soul:* no, indeed, that is a very unfit dwelling for it; and even

a heathen (Seneca) could say, *The mind that is impure, is not capable of God and divine things.* Therefore we see the strain of that book of Proverbs that speaks so much of this wisdom; it requires, in the first chapter, that they who would hear it, do retire themselves from all ungodly customs and practices. And, indeed, how can the soul apprehend spiritual things, that is not in some measure refined from the love of sin, which abuses and bemires the minds of men, and makes them unable to arise to heavenly thoughts? *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,* says our Saviour (Matt. v. 8): not only shall they see him perfectly hereafter, but so far as they can receive him, He will impart and make Himself known unto them here. *If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* (John xiv. 23.) What makes the word obscure is, the filthy mists within; whereas, on the contrary, He will in just judgment hide Himself, and the saving truth of His word, from those that entertain and delight in sin: the very sins wherein they delight, shall obscure and darken the light of the Gospel to them, so that though it shine clear as the sun at noon-day, they shall be as those that live in a dungeon, they shall not discern it.

And as they receive no benefit by the word, who have the evils here mentioned reigning and in full strength within them, so they that are indeed born again, the more they retain of these, the less shall they find the influence and profit of the word; for this exhortation concerns them. They may possibly some of them have a great remainder of these corruptions unmortified; therefore are they exhorted to lay aside entirely those evils, *all malice, all hypocrisy,* &c., else, though they hear the word often, yet they will be in a spiritual atrophy; they will eat much, but grow nothing by it; they will find no increase of grace and spiritual strength.

Would we know the main cause of our fruitless hearing of the word, here it is: men bring not meek and guileless spirits to it, not minds emptied and purified to receive it, but stuffed

with *malice*, and *hypocrisy*, and *pride*, and other such evils; and where should the word enter, when all is so taken up? And if it did enter, how should it prosper amongst so many enemies, or at all abide amongst them? Either they will turn it out again, or choke and kill the power of it. We think religion, and our own lusts, and secret heart-idols, should agree together, because we would have it so; but this is not possible. Therefore, labour to entertain the word of truth in the love of it, and lodge the mystery of faith *in a pure conscience*, as the Apostle St. Paul speaks (1 Tim. iii. 9). Join those together with David, (Psal. cxix. 113,) *I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.* And as here our Apostle, *Lay aside all malice, and hypocrisy, and envy, and evil speakings*, and so receive the word, or else look for no benefit by it here, nor for salvation by it hereafter; but be prevailed upon to cast out all impurity, and give your whole heart to it: so desire it, that *you may grow*, and then, as you desire, *you shall grow by it.*

Every real believer hath received a life from Heaven, far more excelling our natural life, than that excels the life of the beasts. And this life hath its own peculiar desires and delights, which are the proper actings, and the certain characters and evidence of it; amongst others, this is one, and a main one, answerable to the like desire in natural life, namely, a desire of food; and because it is here still imperfect, therefore the natural end of this, is, not only nourishment, but growth, as it is here expressed.

The sincere milk of the word.] The life of grace is the proper life of a reasonable soul, and without it, the soul is dead, as the body is without the soul: so that this may be truly rendered, *reasonable milk*, as some read it; but certainly, that reasonable milk is the word of God, *The milk of the word.*

It was before called *the immortal seed*, and here it is *the milk* of those that are born again, and thus it is nourishment very agreeable to that spiritual life, according to their saying, *Iisdem alimur ex quibus constamus*, we are nourished by that of which we consist. As the milk that infants draw from the

breast, is the most connatural food to them, being of that same substance that nourished them in the womb; so, when they are brought forth, that food follows them as it were for their supply, in the way that is provided in nature for it: by certain veins it ascends into the breasts, and is there fitted for them, and they are by nature directed to find it there. Thus, as a Christian begins to live by the power of the word, so he is by the nature of that spiritual life directed to that same word as its nourishment. To follow the resemblance further in the qualities of milk, after the monkish way, that runs itself out of breath in allegory, I conceive is neither solid nor profitable, and to speak freely, the curious searching of the similitude in other qualities of milk, seems to wrong the quality here given it by the Apostle, in which it is so well resembled by milk, namely, the simple pureness and sincerity of the word; besides that the pressing of comparisons of this kind too far, proves often so constrained ere they have done with it, that by too much drawing, they bring forth blood instead of milk.

Pure and unmixed, as milk drawn immediately from the breast; the pure word of God without the mixture not only of error, but of all other composition of vain unprofitable subtilties, or affected human eloquence, such as become not the majesty and gravity of God's word. *If any man speak*, says our Apostle, (ch. iv. v. 11,) *let him speak as the oracles of God.* Light conceits and flowers of rhetoric wrong the word more than they can please the hearers; the weeds among the corn make it look gay, but it were all the better they were not amongst it. Nor can those mixtures be pleasing to any but carnal minds. They who are indeed the children of God, as infants who like their breast-milk best pure, do love the word best so, and wheresoever they find it so, they relish it well; whereas natural men cannot love spiritual things for themselves, desire not the word for its own sweetness, but would have it sauced with such conceits as possibly spoil the simplicity of it; or at the best, love to hear it for the wit and learning which, without any wrongful mixture of it, they find in one person's

delivering it more than another's. But the natural and genuine appetite of the children of God is to the word for itself, and only as milk, *sincere milk;* and where they find it so, from whomsoever, or in what way soever delivered unto them, they feed upon it with delight. Before conversion, wit or eloquence may draw a man to the word, and possibly prove a happy bait to catch him, (as St. Augustine reports of his hearing St. Ambrose,) but when once he is born again, then it is the milk itself that he desires for itself.

Desire the sincere milk.] Not only hear it because it is your custom, but desire it because it is your food. And it is, 1. A *natural* desire as the infant's desire of milk; not upon any external respect or inducement, but from an inward principle and bent of nature. And because natural, therefore, 2. *Earnest;* not a cold indifferent willing, that cares not whether it obtain or not, but a vehement desire, as the word signifies, and as the resemblance clearly bears; as a child that will not be stilled till it have the breast; offer it whatyou will, silver, gold, or jewels, it regards them not, these answer not its desire, and that must be answered. Thus David, (Psal. cxix. 20,) *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments;* as a child like to break its heart with crying for want of the breast. And again, because natural, it is, 3. *Constant.* The infant is not cloyed nor wearied with daily feeding on the breast, but desires it every day, as if it had never had it before: so the child of God hath an unchangeable appetite for the word; it is daily new to him; he finds still fresh delight in it. Thus David, as before cited, *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath for thy judgments at all times.* And then, Psal. i., this law was his *meditation day and night.* Whereas, a natural man is easily surfeited of it, and the very commonness and cheapness of it makes it contemptible to him. And this is our case; that wherein we should wonder at God's singular goodness to us, and therefore prize his word the more, that very thing makes us despise it: while others, our brethren, have bought this milk with their own blood, we have it upon the easiest terms that can be

wished, only for the desiring, without the hazard of bleeding for it, and scarcely need we be at the pains of sweating for it.

That ye may grow thereby.] This is not only the end for which God hath provided His children with the word, and moves them to desire it, but that which they are to intend in their desire and use of it; and, answerable to God's purpose, they are therefore to desire it, because it is proper for this end, and that by it they may attain this end, *to grow thereby*. And herein, indeed, these children differ from infants in the natural life, who are directed to their food beside their knowledge and without intention of its end; but this *rational milk* is to be desired by the children of God in a rational way, knowing and intending its end, having the use of natural reason renewed and sanctified by supernatural grace.

Now, the end of this desire is, growth. Desire the word, not that you may only hear it; that is to fall very far short of its true end; yea, it is to take the beginning of the work for the end of it. The ear is indeed the mouth of the mind, by which it receives the word, (as Elihu compares it, Job xxxiv. 2,) but meat that goes no further than the mouth, you know, cannot nourish. Neither ought this desire of the word to be, only to satisfy a custom; it were an exceeding folly to make so superficial a thing the end of so serious a work. Again, to hear it only to stop the mouth of conscience, that it may not clamour more for the gross impiety of contemning it, this is to hear it, not out of desire, but out of fear. To desire it only for some present pleasure and delight that a man may find in it, is not the due use and end of it; that there is delight in it, may help to commend it to those that find it so, and so be a mean to advance the end; but the end it is not. To seek no more than a present delight, that evanisheth with the sound of the words that die in the air, is not to desire the word as meat, but as music, as God tells the prophet Ezekiel of his people, (Ezek. xxxiii. 32,) *And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument; for they hear thy words, and they do*

them not. To desire the word for the increase of knowledge, although this is necessary and commendable, and, being rightly qualified, is a part of spiritual accretion, yet, take it as going no further, it is not the true end of the word. Nor is the venting of that knowledge in speech and frequent discourse of the word and the divine truths that are in it; which, where it is governed with Christian prudence, is not to be despised, but commended; yet, certainly, the highest knowledge, and the most frequent and skilful speaking of the word, severed from the growth here mentioned, misses the true end of the word. If any one's head or tongue should grow apace, and all the rest stand at a stay, it would certainly make him a monster; and they are no other, who are knowing and discoursing Christians, and grow daily in that respect, but not at all in holiness of heart and life, which is the proper growth of the children of God. Apposite to their case is Epictetus' comparison of the sheep; they return not what they eat in grass, but in wool. David, in the cxix. Psalm, which is wholly spent upon this subject, the excellency and use of the word of God, expresseth, ver. 15, 16, 24, his delight in it, his earnest desire to be further taught, and to know more of it; his readiness to speak of it, ver. 13, 27; but withal, you know, he joins his desire and care *to keep it, to hide it in his heart,* &c., ver. 5, 11; to make it *the man of his counsel,* to let it be as the whole assembl of his privy councillors, and to be ruled and guided by it; and with him, to use it so, is indeed to grow by it.

If we know what this spiritual life is, and wherein the nature of it consists, we may easily know what is the growth of it. When holiness increases, when the sanctifying graces of the Spirit grow stronger in the soul, and consequently act more strongly in the life of a Christian, then he grows spiritually.

And as the word is the mean of begetting this spiritual life, so likewise of its increase.

1. This will appear, if we consider the nature of the word in general, that it is spiritual and Divine, treats of the highest things, and therefore hath in it a fitness to elevate men's minds

from the earth, and to assimilate to itself such as are often conversant with it; as all kind of doctrine readily doth to those who are much in it, and apply their minds to study it. Doubtless, such kind of things as are frequent with men, have an influence into the disposition of their souls. The gospel is called *light*, and the children of God are likewise called *light*, as being transformed into its nature, and thus they become still the more, by more hearing of it, and so they grow.

2. If we look more particularly unto the strain and tenor of the word, it will appear most fit for increasing the graces of the Spirit in a Christian; for there be in it particular truths relative to them, that are apt to excite them, and set them on work, and so to make them grow, as all habits do, by acting. It doth (as the apostle's word may be translated) *stir up the sparks*, and blow them into a greater flame, make them burn clearer and hotter. This it doth both by particular exhortation to the study and exercise of those graces, sometimes pressing one, and sometimes another, and by right representing to them their objects. The word feeds *faith*, by setting before it the free grace of God, His rich promises, and His power and truth to perform them all; shews it the strength of the new covenant, not depending upon itself, but holding in Christ, in whom all the promises of God are *yea* and *amen;* and drawing faith still to rest more entirely upon his righteousness. It feeds *repentance*, by making the vileness and deformity of sin daily more clear and visible. Still as more of the word hath admission into the soul, the more it hates sin, sin being the more discovered and the better known in its own native colour: as the more light there is in a house, the more any thing in it that is uncleanly or deformed is seen and disliked. Likewise it increaseth *love to God*, by opening up still more and more of his infinite excellency and loveliness. As it borrows the resemblance of the vilest things in nature, to express the foulness and hatefulness of sin, so all the beauties and dignities that are in all the creatures are called together in the word, to give us some small scantling of that Uncreated

Beauty that alone deserves to be loved. Thus might its fitness be instanced in respect to all other graces.

But above all other considerations, this is observable in the word as the increaser of grace, that it holds forth Jesus Christ to our view to look upon, not only as the perfect pattern, but as the full fountain of all grace, from *whose fulness we all receive*. The contemplating of Him, as the perfect image of God, and then drawing from him as having in himself a treasure for us, these give the soul more of that image in which consists truly spiritual growth. This the Apostle expresseth excellently, (2 Cor. iii. *ult.*,) speaking of the ministry of the Gospel revealing Christ, that *beholding in him* (as it is, ch. iv. ver. 6, *in his face*) *the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord:* not only that we may take the copy of his graces, but have a share of them.

There may be many things that might be said of this spiritual growth, but I will add only a few.

First, on the one hand, in the judging of this growth, some persons conclude too rigidly against themselves, that they grow not by the word, because their growth is not so sensible to them as they desire. But, 1. It is well known, that in all things that grow, this principle is not discerned *in motu, sed in termino*, not in the growing, but when they are grown. 2. Besides, other things are to be considered in this: although other graces seem not to advance, yet if thou growest more self-denying and humble in the sense of thy slowness, all is not lost; although the branches shoot not up so fast as thou wishest, yet, if the root grow deeper, and fasten more, it is an useful growth. He that is still learning to be more in Jesus Christ, and less in himself, to have all his dependence and comfort in Him, is doubtless a growing believer.

On the other side, a far greater number conclude wrong in their own favour, imagining that they do grow, if they gain ground in some of those things we mentioned above; namely, more knowledge and more faculty of discoursing, if they find

often some present stirrings of joy or sorrow in hearing of the word, if they reform their life, grow more civil and blameless, *&c.*; yet all these, and many such things, may be in a natural man, who notwithstanding grows not, for that is impossible; he is not, in that state, a subject capable of this growth, for he is dead, he hath none of the new life to which this growth relates. *Herod heard gladly, and obeyed many things* (Mark vi. 20).

Consider, then, what true delight we might have in this. You find a pleasure when you see your children grow, when they begin to stand and walk, and so forth; you love well to perceive your estate or your honour grow: but for the soul to be growing liker God, and nearer Heaven, if we know it, is a pleasure far beyond them all;—to find pride, earthliness, and vanity abating, and faith, love, and spiritual-mindedness increasing; especially if we reflect that this growth is not as our natural life, which is often cut off before it has attained full age, as we call it, and, if it attain that, falls again to move downwards, and decays, as the sun, being at its meridian, begins to decline again: but this life shall grow on in whomsoever it is, and come certainly to its fulness; after which, there is no more need of this word, either for growth or nourishment, no death, no decay, no old age, but perpetual youth, and a perpetual spring; *ver æternum, fulness of joy in the presence of God, and everlasting pleasures at His right hand.*

Ver. 3. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Our natural desire of food arises principally from its necessity for that end which nature seeks, *viz.*, the growth, or at least the nourishment of our bodies. But there is besides, a present sweetness and pleasantness in the use of it, that serves to sharpen our desire, and is placed in our nature for that purpose. Thus the children of God, in their spiritual life, are naturally carried to desire the means of their nourishment and of their growth, being always here in a growing state; but

withal, there is a spiritual delight and sweetness in the word, in that which it reveals concerning God, and this adds to their desire, stirs up their appetite towards it. The former idea is expressed in the foregoing verse, the latter in this. Nature disposes the infant to the breast; but when it hath once tasted of it, that is a new superadded attractive, and makes it desire after it the more earnestly. So here,

The word is fully recommended to us by these two, usefulness and pleasantness: like milk, (as it is compared here,) which is a nourishing food, and withal sweet and delightful to the taste: *by* it we grow, and *in* it we taste the graciousness of God. David, in that psalm which he dedicates wholly to this subject, gives both these as the reason of his appetite. His love to it he expresses pathetically, (cxix. 97,) *O how love I thy law!* It follows, that by it he was *made wiser than his enemies,—than his teachers,*—and *than the ancients;* taught to *refrain from every evil way,* (*ver.* 102,) taught by the Author of that word, the Lord himself, to grow wiser and warier, and holier in the divine ways; and then (*ver.* 103) he adds this other reason, *How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.*

We shall speak, I. of the goodness or graciousness of the Lord; II. of this taste; and III. of the inference from both.

I. The goodness of God: *The Lord is gracious;*—or, of a bountiful, kind disposition. The Hebrew word in Psal. xxxiv. 8, whence this is taken, signifies *good.* The Septuagint render it by the same word as is used here by our Apostle. Both the words signify a benignity and kindness of nature. It is given as one of love's attributes, (1 Cor. xiii. 4,) that it is *kind,* χρηστευεται, ever compassionate, and helpful as it can be in straits and distresses, still ready to forget and pass by evil, and to do good. In the largest and most comprehensive sense must we take the expression here, and yet still we shall speak and think infinitely below what His goodness is. He is naturally good, yea, goodness is His nature; He is goodness and love itself *He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love,*

(1 John iv. 8.) He is primitively good; all goodness is derived from Him, and all that is in the creature comes forth from no other than that ocean; and this Graciousness is still larger than them all.

There is a common bounty of God, wherein he doth good to all, and so *the whole earth is full of his goodness* (Psal. xxxiii. 5.) But the goodness that the Gospel is full of,—the particular stream that runs in that channel, is his peculiar graciousness and love to his own children, that by which they are first enlivened, and then refreshed and sustained in their spiritual being. It is this that is here spoken of. He is gracious to them in freely forgiving their sins, in giving no less than Himself unto them; He frees them from all evils, and fills them with all good. He *satisfies thy mouth with good things*, (Psal. ciii. 3—5,) and so it follows with good reason, (ver. 8,) that he is *merciful and gracious;* and His graciousness is there further expressed in his gentleness and *slowness to anger*, His bearing with the frailties of His own, and pitying them *as a father pitieth his children*, ver. 13.

No friend is so kind and friendly (as this word signifies,) and none so powerful. He is *a present help in trouble*, ready to be found: whereas others may be far off, He is always at hand, and his presence is always comfortable.

They that know God, still find Him a real, useful good. Some things and some persons are useful at one time, and others at another, but God at all times. A well-furnished table may please a man while he hath health and appetite, but offer it to him in the height of a fever, how unpleasant would it be then! Though never so richly decked, it is then not only useless, but hateful to him: but the kindness and love of God is then as seasonable and refreshing to him, as in health, and possibly more; he can find sweetness in that even on his sick bed. The choler abounding in the mouth, in a fever, doth not disrelish this sweetness; it transcends and goes above it. Thus all earthly enjoyments have but some time (as meats) when they are in season, but the graciousness of God is always sweet; the

taste of that is never out of season. See how old age spoils the relish of outward delights, in the example of Barzillai, (2 Sam. xix. 35,) but it makes not this distasteful. Therefore the Psalmist prays, that when other comforts forsake him and wear out, when they ebb from him and leave him on the sand, this may not; that still he may feed on the goodness of God. (Psal. lxxi. 9,) *Cast me not off in old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.* It is the continual influence of His graciousness that makes them still grow like *cedars in Lebanon,* (Psal. xcii. 14, 15,) that makes them *bring forth fruit in old age, and to be still fat and flourishing; to shew that the Lord is upright,* as it is there added, that he is (as the word imports) *still like Himself,* and his goodness ever the same.

Full chests, or large possessions, may seem sweet to a man, till death present itself; but then (as the Prophet speaks of *throwing away their idols of silver and gold to the bats and moles, in the day of calamity,* (Isa. ii. 20,) then, he is forced to throw away all he possesses, with disdain of it and of his former folly in doating on it; then, the kindness of friends, and wife, and children, can do nothing but increase his grief and their own; but then is the love of God the good indeed and abiding sweetness, and it best relisheth when all other things are most unsavoury and uncomfortable.

God is gracious, but it is God in Christ; otherwise we cannot find Him so: therefore this is here spoken in particular of Jesus Christ, (as it appears by that which followeth,) through whom all the peculiar kindness and love of God is conveyed to the soul, for it can come no other way; and the word here mentioned is the Gospel, (See ch. i. ver. *ult.*) whereof Christ is the subject. Though God is mercy and goodness in Himself, yet we cannot find or apprehend Him so to us, but as we are looking through that *medium,* the Mediator. That main point of the goodness of God in the Gospel, which is so sweet to a humbled sinner, the forgiveness of sins, we know we cannot taste of but in Christ, *In whom we have redemption.* (Eph. i. 7.) And all the favour that shines on us, all the grace we

receive, is *of his fulness;* all our acceptance with God, our being taken into grace and kindness again, is in him. *He made us accepted in the beloved,* (ver. 6.) His grace appears in both, as it is there expressed, but it is all in Christ. Let us therefore never leave him out in our desires of tasting the graciousness and love of God: for otherwise we shall but dishonour him, and disappoint ourselves.

The free grace of God was given to be tasted, in the promises, before the coming of Christ in the flesh; but being accomplished in his coming, then was the sweetness of grace made more sensible; then was it more fully broached, and let out to the elect world, when he was pierced on the cross, and his blood poured out for our redemption. *Through those holes of his wounds may we draw, and taste that the Lord is gracious,* says St. Augustine.

II. As to this taste: *Ye have tasted.*] There is a tasting exercised by temporary believers, spoken of, Heb. vi. 4. Their highest sense of spiritual things, (and it will be in some far higher than we easily think,) yet is but a taste, and is called so in comparison of the truer, fuller sense that true believers have of the grace and goodness of God, which, compared with a temporary taste, is more than tasting. The former is merely tasting; rather an imaginary taste than real; but this is a true feeding on the graciousness of God, yet is it called but a taste in respect of the fulness to come. Though it is more than a taste, as distinguishable from the hypocrite's sense, yet it is no more than a taste, compared with the great marriage feast we look for.

Jesus Christ being *all in all* unto the soul, faith apprehending him is all the spiritual sense. Faith is the eye that beholds his matchless beauty, and so kindles love in the soul, and can speak of him as having seen him, and taken particular notice of him, (Cant. v. 9.) It is the ear that discerns his voice, (Cant. ii. 8.) It is faith that smells *his name poured forth as an ointment;* faith that touches him, and draws virtue from him; and faith that tastes him, (Cant. ii. 3;) and so here, *If ye have tasted.*

In order to this, there must be, 1. A firm believing of the truth of the promises, wherein the free grace of God is expressed and exhibited to us. 2. A particular application or attraction of that grace to ourselves, which is the drawing of those *breasts of consolation*, (Isa. lxvi. 11,) namely, the promises contained in the Old and New Testaments. 3. A sense of the sweetness of that grace, being applied or drawn into the soul, and that constitutes properly this taste. No unrenewed man hath any of these in truth, not the highest kind of temporary believer; he cannot have so much as a real lively assent to the general truth of the promises; for had he that, the rest would follow. But as he cannot have the least of these in truth, he may have the counterfeit of them all; not only of assent but of application; yea, and a false spiritual joy arising from it; and all these so drawn to the life, that they may resemble much of the reality: to give clear characters of difference, is not so easy as most persons imagine; but doubtless, the true living faith of a Christian hath in itself such a particular stamp, as brings with it its own evidence, when the soul is clear and the light of God's face shines upon it. Indeed, in the dark we cannot read, nor distinguish one mark from another; but when a Christian hath light to look upon the work of God in his own soul, although he cannot make another sensible of that by which he knows it, yet he himself is ascertained, and can say confidently in himself, "This I know, that this faith and taste of God I have is true; "the seal of the Spirit of God is upon it;" and this is the reading of that *new name in the white stone, which no man knows but he that hath it*, (Revel. ii. 17.) There is, in a true believer, such a constant love to God for Himself, and such a continual desire after Him simply for His own excellency and goodness, as no other can have. On the other side, would an hypocrite deal truly and impartially by himself, he would readily find out something that would discover him, more or less, to himself. But the truth is, men are willing to deceive themselves, and thence arises the difficulty.

One man cannot make another sensible of the sweetness of

Divine grace: he may speak to him of it very excellently, but all he says in that kind, is an unknown language to a natural man; he heareth many good words, but he cannot tell what they mean. *The natural man tastes not the things of God, for they are spiritually discerned.* (1 Cor. ii. 14.)

A spiritual man himself doth not fully conceive this sweetness that he tastes of; it is an infinite goodness, and he hath but a taste of it. The *peace of God*, which is a main fruit of this His goodness, *passeth all understanding*, says the Apostle (Phil. iv. 7): not only all natural understanding, (as some modify it,) but all understanding, even the supernatural understanding of those who enjoy it. And as the godly man cannot conceive it all, so as to that which he conceives, he cannot express it all, and that which he doth express, the carnal mind cannot conceive of by his expression.

But he that hath indeed tasted of this goodness, O how tasteless are those things to him that the world call sweet! As when you have tasted somewhat that is very sweet, it disrelishes other things after it. Therefore can a Christian so easily either want, or use with disregard, the delights of this earth. His heart is not upon them: for the delight that he finds in God, carrieth it unspeakably away from all the rest, and makes them in comparison seem sapless to his taste.

Solomon tasted of all the delicacies, the choicest dishes that are in such esteem amongst men, and not only tasted, but ate largely of them; and yet, see how he goes over them, to let us know what they are, and passes from one dish to another. *This also is vanity*, and of the next, *This also is vanity*, and so through all, and of all in general, *All is vanity and vexation of spirit*, or *feeding on the wind*, as the word may be rendered.

III. We come in the third place to the *inference: If ye have tasted*, &c., then *lay aside all malice and guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings*, (ver. 1,) for it looks back to the whole exhortation. Surely, if you have tasted of that kindness and sweetness of God in Christ, it will compose your spirits, and conform them to Him; it will dif-

fuse such a sweetness through your soul, that there will be on place for *malice and guile;* there will be nothing but love, and meekness, and singleness of heart. Therefore, they who have bitter, malicious spirits, evidence they have not tasted of the love of God. As the Lord is good, so they who taste of His goodness are made like Him. *Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* (Eph. iv. 32.)

Again, if ye have tasted, then desire more. And this will be the truest sign of it: he that is in a continual hunger and thirst after this graciousness of God, has surely tasted of it. *My soul thirsteth for God,* saith David (Psal. xlii. 2). He had tasted before; he remembers, (ver. 4,) that he *went to the house of God, with the voice of joy.*

This is that happy circle wherein the soul of the believer moves: the more they love it, the more they shall taste of this goodness; and the more they taste, the more they shall still love and desire it.

But observe, *if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious,* then, *desire the milk of the word.* This is the sweetness of the *word,* that it hath in it the Lord's graciousness, gives us the knowledge of his love. This they find in it, who have spiritual life and senses, and those senses exercised to discern good and evil; and this engages a Christian to further desire of the word. They are fantastical, deluding tastes, that draw men from the written word, and make them expect other revelations. This graciousness is first conveyed to us by the *word;* there first we taste it, and therefore, there still we are to seek it; to hang upon those breasts that cannot be drawn dry; there the love of God in Christ streams forth in the several promises. The heart that cleaves to the word of God, and delights in it, cannot but find in it, daily, new tastes of His goodness; there it reads His love, and by that stirs up its own to Him, and so grows and loves, every day more than the former, and thus is tending from tastes to fulness. It is but little we can receive here, some drops of joy that enter into us;

but there we shall enter into joy, as vessels put into a sea of happiness.

Ver. 4. To whom, coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.

Ver. 5. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

THE spring of all the dignities of a Christian, which is therefore the great motive of all his duties, is, his near relation to Jesus Christ. Thence it is that the Apostle makes that the great subject of his doctrine, both to represent to his distressed brethren their dignity in that respect, and to press by it the necessary duties he exhorts unto. Having spoken of their spiritual life and growth in him, under the resemblance of natural life, he prosecutes it here by another comparison very frequent in the Scriptures, and therefore makes use in it of some passages of these Scriptures that were prophetical of Christ and his Church. Though there be here two different similitudes, yet they have so near a relation one to another, and meet so well in the same subject, that he joins them together, and then illustrates them severally in the following verses; a *temple*, and a *priesthood*, comparing the saints to both: The former in these words of this verse.

We have in it, I. The nature of the building; II. The materials of it; III. The structure or way of building it.

I. The *nature* of it is, *a spiritual building*. Time and place, we know, received their being from God, and He was eternally before both; He is therefore styled by the prophet, *The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity* (Isa. lvii. 15). But having made the world, He fills it, though not as contained in it, and so the whole frame of it is His palace or temple, but after a more special manner, the higher and statelier part of it, the highest heaven; therefore it is called His *holy place*, and *the habitation of His holiness and glory*. And on earth, the houses of His public worship are called *His houses;* especially the Jewish temple in its time, having

in it such a relative typical holiness, which others have not. But besides all these, and beyond them all in excellency, He hath a house wherein he dwells more peculiarly than in any of the rest, even more than in Heaven, taken for the place only, and that is this *spiritual building*. And this is most suitable to the nature of God. As our Saviour says of the necessary conformity of his worship to Himself, *God is a Spirit, and therefore will be worshipped in spirit and in truth* (John iv. 24): so it holds of his house: He must have a spiritual one, because he is a Spirit; so God's temple is His people.

And for this purpose chiefly did He make the world, the heaven and the earth, that in it He might raise this spiritual building for Himself to dwell in for ever, to have a number of His reasonable creatures to enjoy Him, and glorify Him in eternity. And from that eternity He knew what the dimensions, and frame, and materials of it should be. The continuance of this present world, as now it is, is but for the service of this work, like the scaffolding about it; and therefore, when this spiritual building shall be fully completed, all the present frame of things in the world, and in the Church itself, shall be taken away, and appear no more.

This Building is, as the particular designation of its materials will teach us, *the whole invisible Church of God*, and each good man is a stone of this building. But as the nature of it is spiritual, it hath this privilege, (as they speak of the soul,) that it is *tota in toto, et tota in qualibet parte:* the whole Church is the spouse of Christ, and each believing soul hath the same title and dignity to be called so: thus, each of these stones is called a whole temple, *temples of the Holy Ghost* (1 Cor. vi. 19); though, taking the Temple or Building, in a completer sense, they are but each one a part, or a stone of it, as here it is expressed.

The whole excellency of this Building is comprised in this, that it is *spiritual*, a term distinguishing it from all other buildings, and preferring it above them. And inasmuch as the Apostle speaks immediately after of a priesthood and

sacrifices, it seems to be called a *spiritual building*, particularly in opposition to that material temple wherein the Jews gloried, which was now null in regard of its former use, and was quickly after entirely destroyed. But while it stood, and the legal use of it stood in its fullest vigour, yet, in this respect, still it was inferior, that it was not *a spiritual house*, made up of *living stones*, as this, but of a like matter with other earthly buildings.

This spiritual house is the palace of the Great King, or His temple. The Hebrew word for *palace* and *temple* is one. God's temple is a palace, and therefore must be full of the richest beauty and magnificence, but such as agrees with the nature of it, a spiritual beauty. In that Psalm that wishes so many prosperities, one is, that *their daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace* (Psal. cxliv. 12). Thus is the Church: she is called the *King's daughter* (Psal. xlv. 13); but her comeliness is invisible to the world, *she is all glorious within.* Through sorrows and persecutions, she may be smoky and black to the world's eye, as the *tents of Kedar;* but in regard of spiritual beauty, she *is comely as the curtains of Solomon.* And in this the Jewish temple resembles it aright, which had most of its riches and beauty in the inside. Holiness is the gold of this spiritual house, and it is inwardly enriched with that.

The glory of the Church of God consists not in stately buildings of temples, and rich furniture, and pompous ceremonies; these agree not with its spiritual nature. Its true and genuine beauty is to grow in spirituality, and so to be liker itself, and to have more of the presence of God, and His glory filling it as a cloud. And it hath been observed that the more the Church grew in outward riches and state, the less she grew, or rather the more sensibly she abated in spiritual excellencies. But the spiritualness of this Building will better appear in considering particularly,

II. The *materials* of it, as here expressed: *To whom coming*, &c., *ye also, as lively stones, are*, &c. Now the

whole building is Christ mystical, Christ, together with the entire body of the elect: He as the foundation, and they as the stones built upon him; He, the living stone, and they likewise, by union with him, living stones; He, *having life in himself*, (as he speaks, John vi.,) and they deriving it from him; He, primitively living, and they, by participation. For therefore is He called here a *living stone*, not only because of his immortality and glorious resurrection, being *a Lamb that was slain, and is alive again for ever*, but because he is the principle of spiritual and eternal life unto us, a living foundation that transfuses this life into the whole building, and every stone of it, *In whom* (says the Apostle, Ephes. ii. 21) *all the building is fitly framed together.* It is the Spirit that flows from Him, which enlivens it, and knits it together, as a living body; for the same word συναρμολογούμενον is used, (Ch. iv. 16,) for the Church, under the similitude of a body. When it is said, (Ch. ii. 20,) *to be built upon the foundation of the prophets and Apostles*, it only refers to their doctrine concerning Christ; and therefore it is added, that He, as being the subject of their doctrine, is the *chief corner-stone.* The foundation, then, of the Church, lies not in *Rome*, but in Heaven, and therefore is out of the reach of all enemies, and above the power of *the gates of hell.* Fear not, then, when you see the storms arise, and the winds blow against this spiritual Building, for *it shall stand; it is built upon an* invisible immovable *Rock;* and that great *Babylon*, Rome itself, that, under the false title and pretence of supporting this Building, is working to overthrow it, shall be utterly overthrown, and laid equal with the ground, and never be rebuilt again.

But this *Foundation-stone*, as it is commended by its quality, that it is a *living* and enlivening stone, having life and giving life to those that are built on it, so it is also further described by God's choosing it, and by its own worth; in both opposed to men's disesteem, and therefore it is said here to be *chosen of God, and precious.* God did indeed from eternity contrive this Building, and choose this same Foundation, and

accordingly, in the fulness of time, did perform His purpose so, the thing being one, we may take it either for His purpose, or the performance of it, or both; yet it seems most suitable to the strain of the words, and to the place after alleged, in respect to *laying him in Sion* in opposition to the rejection of men, that we take it for God's actual employing of Jesus Christ in the work of our redemption. He alone was fit for that work; it was utterly impossible that any other should bear the weight of that service, (and so of this building,) than He who was Almighty. Therefore the Spouse calls him *the select*, or *choice of ten thousand*, yet he was *rejected of men.* There is an antipathy (if we may so speak) betwixt the mind of God and corrupt nature; the things that are highly esteemed with men are abomination to God; and thus we see here, that which is highly esteemed with God, is cast out and *disallowed by men.* But surely there is no comparison; the choosing and esteem of God stands; and by that, (judge men of Christ as they will,) he is the foundation of this Building. And he is in true value answerable to this esteem: he is *precious*, which seems to signify a kind of inward worth, hidden from the eyes of men, blind unbelieving men, but well known to God, and to those to whom he reveals him. And this is the very cause of his rejection by the most, the ignorance of his worth and excellency; as a precious stone that the skilful lapidary esteems of great value, an ignorant beholder makes little or no account of.

These things hold likewise in the other stones of this Building; they, too, are *chosen* before time: all that should be of this Building, fore-ordained in God's purpose, all written in that book beforehand, and then, in due time, they are chosen, by actual calling, according to that purpose, hewed out and severed by God's own hand, out of the quarry of corrupt nature; dead stones in themselves, as the rest, but made living, by his bringing them to Christ, and so made truly *precious*, and accounted precious by him who hath made them so. All the stones in this Building are called *God's jewels* (Mal. iii. 17).

That they be vilified, and scoffed at, and despised by men,

though they pass for fools and the refuse of the world, yet they may easily digest all that, in the comfort of this, if they are chosen of God, and precious in His eyes. This is the very lot of Christ, and therefore by that the more welcome, that it conforms them to Him,—suits these stones to their Foundation.

And if we consider it aright, what a poor despicable thing is the esteem of men! How soon is it past! *It is a small thing for me*, says the Apostle Paul, *to be judged of men* (1 Cor. iv. 3). Now, that God often chooses for this building such stones as men cast away as good for nothing, see 1 Cor. i. 26. And where he says, (Isa. lvii. 15,) that He *dwells in the high and holy place*, what is His other dwelling? His habitation on earth, is it in great palaces and courts? no; but *with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.* Now, these are the basest in men's account; yet *He* chooses them, and prefers them to all other palaces and temples. (Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.) *Thus saith the Lord, The Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.* q. d. You cannot gratify me with any dwelling, for I myself have made all, and a surer house than any you can make me, *The Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool:* but I, who am so high, am pleased to regard the lowly.

III. We have the *structure*, or way of building: *To whom coming.*] First, *coming*, then *built up*. They that come unto Christ, come not only from *the world that lieth in wickedness*, but out of themselves. Of a great many that seem to come to Christ it may be said, that they are not come to Him, *because they have not left themselves.* This is believing on Him, which is the very resigning of the soul to Christ, and living by him. *Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life*, says Christ (John v. 40.) He complains of it as a wrong done to him; but the loss is ours. It is his glory to give us life who were dead;

but it is our happiness to receive that life from him. Now these stones come unto their foundation; which imports the moving of the soul to Christ, being moved by his Spirit, and that the will acts, and willingly, (for it cannot act otherwise,) but still as being actuated and drawn by the Father (John vi. 65). *No man can come to me except the Father draw him.* And the outward mean of drawing, is, by the word; it is the sound of that harp, that brings the stones of this spiritual building together. And then, being united to Christ, they are built up; that is, as St. Paul expresses it, (Ephes. ii. 21,) *they grow up unto a holy temple in the Lord.*

In times of peace, the Church may dilate more, and build as it were into breadth, but in times of trouble it arises more in height; it is then built upwards: as in cities where men are straitened, they build usually higher than in the country. Notwithstanding the Church's afflictions, yet still the building is going forward; it is built, as Daniel speaks of Jerusalem, *in troublous times.* And it is this which the Apostle intends, as suiting with his foregoing exhortation: this passage may be read exhortatively too; but taking it rather as asserting their condition, it is for this end, that they may remember to be like it, and grow up. For this end he expressly calls them *living stones;* an adjunct root not usual for stones, but here inseparable; and therefore, though the Apostle changes the similitude, from infants to stones, yet he will not let go this quality of living, as making chiefly for his purpose.

To teach us the necessity of growth in believers, they are therefore often compared to things that grow, to *trees planted* in fruitful growing places, as *by the rivers of water;* to *cedars in Lebanon,* where they are tallest; to *the morning light;* to infants on the breast; and here, where the word seems to refuse it, to *stones;* yet (it must, and well doth admit this unwonted epithet) they are called *living* and *growing stones.*

If, then, you would have the comfortable persuasion of this union with Christ, see whether you find your souls established upon Jesus Christ, finding him as your strong foundation; not

resting on yourselves, nor on any other thing either within you, or without you, but supported by him alone; drawing life from him, by virtue of that union, as from a living foundation, so as to say with the Apostle, *I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* (Gal. ii. 20.)

As these stones are built on Christ by faith, so they are cemented one to another by love; and, therefore, where that is not, it is but a delusion for persons to think themselves parts of this building. As it is knit to him, it is knit together in itself through him; and if dead stones in a building support and mutually strengthen one another, how much more ought *living stones* in an active lively way so to do! The stones of this Building keep their place; the lower rise not up to be in the place of the higher. As the Apostle speaks of the parts of the body, so the stones of this building in humility and love keep their station, and grow up in it, *edifying in love,* saith the Apostle, (Eph. iv. 16,) importing, that the want of this much prejudices edification.

These stones, because they are living, therefore grow in the life of grace and spiritualness, being a *spiritual building;* so that if we find not this, but our hearts are still carnal, and glued to the earth, *minding earthly things*, wiser in those than in spirituals, this evidences strongly against us, that we are not of this Building. How few of us have that spiritualness that becomes the temples of the Holy Ghost, or the stones of that Building! Base lusts are still lodging and ruling within us, and so our hearts are as cages of unclean birds and filthy spirits.

Consider this as your happiness, to form part of this Building, and consider the unsolidness of other comforts and privileges. If some have called those stones happy, that were taken for the building of temples or altars, beyond those in common houses, how true is it here! Happy indeed the stones that God chooses to be living stones in this spiritual temple, though they be hammered and hewed to be polished for it, by afflictions and the inward work of mortification and repentance. It

is worth the enduring of all, to be fitted for this Building. Happy they, beyond all the rest of men, though they be set in never so great honours, as prime parts of politic buildings, (states and kingdoms,) in the courts of kings, yea, or kings themselves. For all other buildings, and all the parts of them, shall be demolished and come to nothing, from the foundation to the cope-stone; all your houses, both cottages and palaces; *the elements shall melt away, and the earth, with all the works in it, shall be consumed*, as our Apostle hath it (2 Pet. iii. 10). But this spiritual Building shall grow up to Heaven, and, being come to perfection, shall abide for ever in perfection of beauty and glory. In it shall be found *no unclean thing*, nor unclean person, but only they *that are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

An holy priesthood.] For the worship and ceremonies of the Jewish church were all shadows of Jesus Christ, and have their accomplishment in him, not only after a singular manner in his own person, but in a derived way, in his mystical body, his Church. The Priesthood of the Law represented him as the great High Priest that *offered up himself for our sins*, and that is a priesthood altogether incommunicable; neither is there any peculiar office of priesthood for offering sacrifice in the Christian church, but his alone who is head of it. But this dignity that is here mentioned, of a *spiritual priesthood*, offering up *spiritual sacrifices*, is common to all those who are in Christ. As they are living stones built on him into a spiritual temple, so they are priests of that same temple made by him. (Revel. i. 6.) As he was, after a transcendent manner, temple, and priest, and sacrifice, so, in their kind, are Christians all these three through him; and by his Spirit that is in them, their offerings through him are made acceptable.

We have here, I. The office; II. The service of that office; III. The success of that service.

I. The Office. The death of Jesus Christ, as being every way powerful for reconcilement and union, did not only break down the partition wall of guiltiness that stood betwixt God

and man, but the wall of ceremonies that stood betwixt the Jews and the Gentiles: it made all that believe, one with God, *and made of both one*, as the Apostle speaks—united them one to another. The way of salvation was made known, not to one nation only, but to all people: so that whereas the knowledge of God was before confined to one little corner, it is now diffused through the nations; and whereas the dignity of their priesthood staid in a few persons, all they who believe are now thus dignified to be priests unto God the Father. And this was signified by the rending of the vail of the Temple at his death; not only that those ceremonies and sacrifices were to cease, as being all fulfilled in him, but that the people of God, who were before by that vail held out in the outer court, were to be admitted into the Holy Place, as being all of them priests, and fitted to offer sacrifices.

The Priesthood of the Law was holy, and its holiness was signified by many outward things suitable to their manner, by *anointings*, and *washings*, and *vestments;* but in this spiritual priesthood of the Gospel, holiness itself is instead of all those, as being the substance of all. The children of God are all anointed, and purified, and clothed with holiness. But then,

II. There is here the service of this office, namely, *to offer*. There is no priesthood without sacrifice, for these terms are co-relative, and offering sacrifices was the chief employment of the legal priests. Now, because the priesthood here spoken of is altogether spiritual, therefore the sacrifices must be so too, as the Apostle here expresses it.

We are saved the pains and cost of bringing bullocks and rams, and other such sacrifices; and these are in their stead. As the Apostle speaks (Heb. vii. 12) of the high priesthood of Christ, that *the Priesthood being changed, there followed of necessity a change of the law;* so, in this priesthood of Christians, there is a change of the kind of sacrifice from the other. All sacrifice is not taken away, but it is changed from the offering of those things formerly in use, to spiritual sacrifices.

Now these are every way preferable; they are easier and

cheaper to us, and yet more precious and acceptable to God; as it follows here in the text. Even in the time when the other sacrifices were in request, these spiritual offerings had ever the precedence in God's account, and without them he hated and despised all burnt-offerings and the largest sacrifices, though they were then according to His own appointment. How much more should we abound in spiritual sacrifice, who are eased of the other! How much more holds that answer now, that was given even in those times to the inquiry, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?* &c. (Mic. vi. 6.) You need not all that trouble and expense, *thousands of rams*, &c.; that is at hand which God requires most of all, namely *to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* So Psalm l. 23: *Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me.* That which is peculiarly spoken of Christ, holds in Christians by conformity with him.

But though the spiritual sacrificing is easier in its own nature, yet, to the corrupt nature of man, it is by far the harder. He would rather choose still all the toil and cost of the former way, if it were in his option. This was the sin of the Jews in those times, that they leaned the soul upon the body's service too much, and would have done enough of that, to be dispensed from this spiritual service. Hence are the Lord's frequent reproofs and complaints of this, Psalm l., Isaiah i., &c. Hence, the willingness in Popery for outward work, for penances and satisfactions of bodies and purses,—any thing of that kind, if it might serve, rather than the inward work of repentance and mortification, the spiritual service and sacrifices of the soul. But the answer to all those from God, is that of the Prophet, *Who hath required these things at your hands?*

Indeed, the sacred writers press works of charity, if they be done with a right-hand, and the left-hand not so much as acquainted with the business, as our Saviour speaks, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth.* (Matt. vi. 3.) They must be done with a right and single intention, and from a right principle moving to them, without any vain opinion of meriting

by them with God, or any vain desire of gaining applause with men, but merely out of love to God, and to man for His sake. Thus they become one of these spiritual sacrifices, and therefore ought by no means to be neglected by Christian priests, that is, by any who are Christians.

Another spiritual sacrifice is, *the prayers of the saints:* Rev. v. 8.—Psal. cxli. 2. *Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.* It is not the composition of prayer, or the eloquence of expression, that is the sweetness of it in God's account, and makes it a sacrifice of a pleasing smell or sweet odour to Him, but the breathing forth of the desire of the heart; that is what makes it a spiritual sacrifice, otherwise, it is as carnal, and dead, and worthless in God's account, as the carcasses of beasts. Incense can neither smell nor ascend without fire; no more doth prayer, unless it arises from a bent of spiritual affection: it is that which both makes it smell, and sends it heavenwards, makes it never leave moving upwards, till it come before God, and smell sweet in His nostrils, which few, too few, of our prayers do.

Praise also is a *sacrifice;* to make respectful and honourable mention of the name of God, and of His goodness; to bless Him humbly and heartily. (See Heb. xiii. 15, and Psal. l. 14, 23.) *Offer unto God thanksgiving. Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me.* And this is that sacrifice that shall never end, but continues in heaven to eternity.

Then, *a holy course of life* is called the *sacrifice of righteousness* (Psal. iv. 6, and Phil. iv. 18.) So also (Heb. xiii. 16,) where the Apostle shews what sacrifices succeed to those which, as he hath taught at large, are abolished. Christ was sacrificed for us, and that offering alone was powerful to take away sin; but our gratulatory sacrifices, praise and alms, are as incense burnt to God, of which as the standers-by find the sweet smell, so the holy life of Christians smells sweet to those with whom they live. But the wicked, as putrefied carcasses, are of a noisome smell to God and man. *They are corrupt; they have done abominable works.* (Psal. xiv. 4.)

In a word, that sacrifice of ours which includes all these, and without which none of these can be rightly offered, is, *Ourselves*, our whole selves. Our *bodies* are to be presented *a living sacrifice* (Rom. xii. 1); and they are not that without our souls. It is our heart given, that gives all the rest, for that commands all. *My son, give me thy heart,* and then the other will follow, *thine eyes will delight in my ways.* This makes the eyes, ears, tongue, and hands, and all, to be holy, as God's peculiar property; and being once given and consecrate to Him, it becomes sacrilege to turn them to any unholy use. This makes a man delight to hear and speak of things that concern God, and to think on Him frequently, to be holy in his secret thoughts, and in all his ways. In every thing we bring Him, every thanksgiving and prayer we offer, His eye is upon the heart: He looks if it be along with our offering, and if He miss it, He cares not for all the rest, but throws it back again.

The heart must be offered withal, and the whole heart, all of it entirely given to Him. *Se totum obtulit Christus pro nobis:* Christ offered up his whole self for us. In another sense, which crosses not this, thy heart must not be *whole* but *broken.* (Psal. li. 17.) But if thou find it unbroken, yet give it Him, with a desire that it may be broken. And if it be broken, and if, when thou hast given it Him, He break it more, yea and melt it too, yet thou shalt not repent thy gift; for He breaks and melts it, that He may refine it, and make it up a new and excellent frame, and may impress His own image on it, and make it holy, and so like to Himself.

Let us then give Him ourselves or nothing; and to give ourselves to Him is not His advantage, but ours. As the philosopher said to his poor scholar, who, when others gave him great gifts, told him, *He had nothing but Himself to give; It is well,* said he, *and I will endeavour to give thee back to thyself better than I received thee:*—thus doth God with us, and thus doth a Christian make himself his daily sacrifice: he renews this gift of himself every day to God, and receiving it every day bettered again, still he hath the more delight in

giving it, as being fitter for God, the more it is sanctified by former sacrificing.

Now that whereby we offer all other spiritual sacrifices, and even ourselves, is love. That is the holy fire that burns up all, sends up our prayers, and our hearts, and our whole selves a whole burnt offering to God; and, as the fire of the altar, it is originally from Heaven, being kindled by God's own love to us; and by this the Church (and so each believer) ascends like a *straight pillar of smoke*, (as the word is, Cant. iii. 6,) going even up to God *perfumed with aloes and all the spices*, all the graces of the Spirit received from Christ, but above all, with his own merits.

How far from this are the common multitude of us, though professing to be Christians! Who considers his holy calling? As the peculiar holiness of the ministry should be much in their eye and thoughts who are called to it, as *they* should study to be answerably eminent in holiness, so, all you that are Christians, consider, you are priests unto God; being called a *holy priesthood*, thus you ought to be. But if we speak what we are indeed, we must say rather, we are an unholy priesthood, a shame to that name and holy profession. Instead of the sacrifice of a godly life, and the incense of prayer and praise, in families and alone, what is there with many, but the filthy vapours of profane speaking and a profane life, as a noisome smell arising out of a dunghill?

But you that have once offered up yourselves unto God, and are still doing so with all the services you can reach, continue to do so, and be assured, that how unworthy soever yourselves and all your offerings be, yet they shall not be rejected.

The Third thing here observable is, the Success of that service: *Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ* (Heb. xiii. 16). The children of God do delight in offering sacrifices to Him; but if they might not know that they were well taken at their hands, this would discourage them much; therefore this is added. How often do the godly find it in their sweet experience, that when they come to pray, He welcomes them, and gives them

such evidences of His love, as they would not exchange for all worldly pleasures! And when this doth not so presently appear at other times, yet they ought to believe it. He accepts themselves and their ways when offered in sincerity, though never so mean; though they sometimes have no more than a sigh or a groan, it is most properly a spiritual sacrifice.

Stay not away because thou, and the gifts thou offerest, are inferior to the offering of others. No, none are excluded for that; only give what thou hast, and act with affection, for that he regards most. Under the law, they who had not a lamb, were welcome with a pair of pigeons. So that the Christian may say, *What I am, Lord, I offer myself unto Thee, to be wholly Thine; and had I a thousand times more of outward or inward gifts, all should be Thine; had I a greater estate, or wit, or learning, or power, I would endeavour to serve Thee with all. What I have, I offer Thee, and it is most truly Thine; it is but of Thy own that I give Thee.* No one needs forbear sacrifice for poverty, for what God desires, is, the heart, and there is none so poor, but hath a heart to give him.

But meanness is not all; there is a guiltiness on ourselves and on all we offer; our prayers and services are polluted. But this hinders not neither; for our acceptance is not for ourselves, but for the sake of One who hath no guiltiness at all: *Acceptable by Jesus Christ.* In Him, our persons are clothed with righteousness, and in His clothing, we are, as Isaac said of Jacob in his brother's garments, *as the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed* (Gen. xxvii. 27). And all our other sacrifices, our prayers, and services, if we offer them by Him, and put them into His hand, to offer to the Father, then doubt not they will be accepted in Him; for this *By Jesus Christ,* is relative both to our offering and our acceptance. We ought not to offer any thing but *by Him* (Heb. xiii. 15); and so, we are well-pleasing to the Father. For he is His well-beloved Son, in whom His soul is delighted; not only delighted and

pleased with himself, but *in him*, with all things and persons that appear in him, and are presented by him.

And this alone answers all our doubts. For we ourselves, as little as we see that way, yet may see so much in our best services, so many wanderings in prayer, so much deadness, &c., as would make us still doubtful of acceptance; so that we might say with Job, *Although he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to me;* were it not for this, that our prayers and all our sacrifices pass through Christ's hand. He is that *Angel that hath much sweet odours*, to mingle with *the prayers of the Saints* (Rev. viii. 3, 4). He purifies them with his own merits and intercession, and so makes them pleasing unto the Father. How ought our hearts to be knit to Him, by whom we are brought into favour with God, and kept in favour with Him, in whom we obtain all the good we receive, and in whom all we offer is accepted! In Him are all our supplies of grace, and our hopes of glory.

Ver. 6. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture: behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

That which is the chief of the works of God, is therefore very reasonably the chief subject of his word, as both most excellent in itself, and of most concernment for us to know; and this is, the saving of lost mankind by his Son. Therefore is *his name as precious ointment*, or perfume, diffused through the whole Scriptures: all these holy leaves smell of it, not only those that were written after his coming, but those that were written before. *Search the Scriptures*, says he himself, *for they testify of me*, (John v. 39,) namely, the scriptures of the Old Testament, which were alone then written; and to evidence this, both Himself and his Apostles make so frequent use of their testimony, and we find so much of them inserted into the New, as being both one in substance—their lines meeting in the same Jesus Christ as their centre.

The Apostle having, in the foregoing verse, expressed the happy estate and dignity of Christians under the double notion, 1. Of a spiritual house or temple, 2. Of a spiritual priesthood,—here amplifies and confirms both from the writings of the Prophets; the former, verses 6, 7, 8; the latter, verse 9. The places that he cites, touching this Building, are most pertinent, for they have clearly in them all that he spoke of it, both concerning the foundation and the edifice: as the first, in these words of Isaiah, (Chap. xxviii. 16,) *Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone*, &c.

Let this commend the Scriptures much to our diligence and affection, that their great theme is, our Redeemer, and redemption wrought by Him; that they contain the doctrine of his excellencies,—are the lively picture of his matchless beauty. Were we more in them, we should daily see more of him in them, and so of necessity love him more. But we must look within them: the latter is but the case; the spiritual sense is what we should desire to see. We usually huddle them over, and see no further than their outside, and therefore find so little sweetness in them; we read them, but we *search* them not, as he requires. Would we dig into those golden mines, we should find treasures of comfort that cannot be spent, but which would furnish us in the hardest times.

The prophecy here cited, if we look upon it in its own place, we shall find inserted in the middle of a very sad denunciation of judgment against the Jews. And this is usual with the Prophets, particularly with this evangelical prophet Isaiah, to uphold the spirits of the godly, in the worst times, with this one great consolation, the promise of the Messiah, as weighing down all, alike temporal distresses and deliverances. Hence are those sudden ascents (so frequent in the Prophets) from their present subject to this great *Hope of Israel.* And if this expectation of a Saviour was so pertinent a comfort in all estates, so many ages before the accomplishment of it, how wrongfully do we undervalue it being accomplished, if we cannot live upon it, and answer all with it, and sweeten all our

griefs with this advantage, that there *is a foundation-stone laid in Sion* on which they that are builded shall be sure not to be ashamed !

In these words there are five things, 1. This Foundation-stone; 2. The laying of it; 3. The building on it; 4. The firmness of this building; and 5. The greatness and excellency of the work.

1*st*. For the *Foundation*, called here a *chief corner-stone*. Though the Prophet's words are not precisely rendered, yet the substance and sense of them are the same. In Isaiah, both expressions, *a foundation*, and *a corner-stone*, are employed, (Ch. xxviii. ver. 16,) the corner-stone in the foundation being the main support of the building, and throughout, the corner-stones uniting and knitting the building together; and therefore this same word, *a corner*, is frequently taken in Scripture for *princes*, or heads of people, (see Judg. xx. 2; 1 Sam. xiv. 38,) because good governors and government are that which upholds and unites the societies of people in states or kingdoms as one building. And Jesus Christ is indeed the alone head and king of his Church, who gives it laws, and rules it in wisdom and righteousness; the alone rock on which His Church is built; not Peter, (if we will believe St. Peter himself, as here he teacheth us,) much less his pretended successors; He is the foundation and corner-stone that knits together the walls of Jews and Gentiles, *having made of both one*, as St. Paul speaks, (Eph. ii. 14,) and unites the whole number of believers into one everlasting temple, and bears the weight of the whole fabric.

Elected,] or chosen out for the purpose, and altogether fit for it. Isaiah hath it, *A stone of trial*, or *a tried stone*, as things amongst men are best chosen after trial. So Jesus Christ was certainly known by the Father as most fit for that work to which he chose him before he tried him, as after, upon trial in his life, and death, and resurrection, he proved fully answerable to his Father's purpose, in all that was appointed him.

All the strength of angels combined had not sufficed for that

business; but the wise Architect of this Building knew both what it would cost, and what a foundation was needful to bear so great and so lasting a structure as he intended. Sin having defaced and demolished the first building of man in the integrity of his creation, it was God's design, out of the very ruins of fallen man, to raise a more lasting edifice than the former, one that should not be subject to decay, and therefore He fitted for it a Foundation that might be everlasting. The sure founding is the main thing requisite in order to a lasting building; therefore, that it might stand for the true honour of His majesty, (which Nebuchadnezzar vainly boasted of his Babel,) He chose His own Son, *made flesh*. He was God, that he might be a strong foundation; he was Man, that he might be suitable to the nature of the stones whereof the building was to consist, that they might join the cement together.

Precious.] Inestimably precious, by all the conditions that can give worth to any; by rareness, and by inward excellency, and by useful virtues. *Rare* He is, out of doubt; there is not such a person in the world again; therefore He is called by the same prophet, (Isa. ix. 6,) *Wonderful*, full of wonders:—the power of God and the frailty of Man dwelling together in his person; *the Ancient of days* becoming an infant; He that *stretched forth the Heavens*, bound up in swaddling clothes in that his infancy, and in his full age stretched forth on the cross; altogether *spotless* and *innocent*, and yet suffering not only the unjust cruelties of men, but the just wrath of God his Father; *the Lord of Life*, and yet dying! His *excellency* appears in the same things, in that he is the Lord of life, *God blessed for ever*, equal with the Father: the sparkling brightness of this precious stone is no less than this, that he is *the brightness of the Father's glory;* (Heb. i. 3;) so bright, that men could not have beheld him appearing in himself; therefore, he vailed it with our flesh; and yet, through that it shined and sparkled so, that the Apostle St. John says of himself and of those others who had their eyes opened, and looked right upon him, *He dwelt amongst us*, and

he had a tent like ours, and yet through that *we saw his glory, as the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth*, (John i. 14,)—the Deity filling his human nature with all manner of grace in its highest perfection. And Christ is not only thus excellent in himself, but of precious *virtue*, which he lets forth and imparts to others; of such virtue, that a touch of him is the only cure of spiritual diseases. Men tell of strange virtues of some stones; but it is certain that this Precious Stone hath not only virtue to heal the sick, but even to raise the dead. Dead bodies he raised in the days of his abode on earth, and dead souls he still doth raise by the power of his word. The prophet Malachi calls him *the Sun of Righteousness*, (ch. iv. 2,) which includes in it the rareness and excellency we speak of: he is singular; as there is but one sun in the world, so but one Saviour; and his lustre is such a stone as outshines the sun in its fullest brightness. And then for his useful virtue, the Prophet adds, that *He hath healing under his wings*. This his worth is unspeakable, and remains infinitely beyond all these resemblances.

2dly, There is here *the laying* of this Foundation: it is said to be laid in *Sion;* that is, it is laid in the Church of God. And it was first laid in *Sion*, literally, that being then the seat of the Church and of the true religion; he was laid there, in his manifestation in the flesh, and suffering, and dying, and rising again; and afterwards, being preached through the world, he became the foundation of his Church in all places where his name was received; and so was a stone growing great, till it *filled the whole earth*, as Daniel hath it, (ch. ii. v. 35.)

He saith, *I lay;* by which the Lord expresseth this to be His own proper work, as the Psalmist speaks of the same subject (Psal. cxviii. 23.) *This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes*. So Isaiah, speaking of this promised Messiah, *The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this* (ch. ix. 7).

And it is not only said, *I lay*, because God the Father had

the first thought of this great work,—the model of it was in His mind from eternity, and the accomplishment of it was by His almighty power in the morning of his Son's birth, and his life, and death, and resurrection; but also, to signify the freeness of his grace, in giving His Son to be a foundation of happiness to man, without the least motion from man, or motive in man, to draw Him to it. And this seems to be signified by the unexpected inserting of these prophetical promises of the Messiah, in the midst of complaints of the people's wickedness, and threatening them with punishment; to intimate that there is no connexion betwixt this work and any thing on man's part to procure it; *q. d.*, Although you do thus provoke me to destroy you, yet, of Myself I have other thoughts, there is another purpose in my mind. And it is observable to this purpose, that that clearest promise of the virgin's Son is given, not only unrequired, but being refused by that profane king Ahaz, Isa. vii. 10—13.

This, again, that the Lord himself is the Layer of this Corner-stone, teaches us the firmness of it; which is likewise expressed in the Prophet's words, very emphatically, by redoubling the same word, *Musad, Musad; fundamentum, fundamentum.*

So, Psal. ii. 6, *I have set my king upon my holy hill of Sion*:—who then shall dethrone him? *I have given him the heathen for his inheritance, and the ends of the earth for his possession;* and who will hinder him to take possession of his right? If any offer to do so, what shall they be, but a number of earthen vessels fighting against an iron sceptre, and so certainly breaking themselves in pieces? Thus here, *I lay this foundation-stone;* and if I lay it, who shall remove it? and what I build upon it, who shall be able to cast down? For it is the glory of this great Master-builder, that the whole fabric which is of His building cannot be ruined; and for that end hath He laid an unmoveable foundation; and for that end are we taught and reminded of its firmness, that we may have this confidence concerning the Church of God that is built

upon it. To the eye of nature, the Church seems to have no foundation; as Job speaks of the earth, that *it is hung upon nothing*, and yet, as the earth remaineth firm, being established in its place by the word and power of God, the Church is most firmly founded upon the *Word made flesh*—Jesus Christ as its *chief corner-stone*. And as all the winds that blow cannot remove the earth out of its place, so neither can all the attempts of men, no, nor of *the gates of Hell, prevail against the Church* (Matt. xvi. 18). It may be beaten with very boisterous storms, *but it cannot fall, because it is founded upon this Rock* (Matt. vii. 25). Thus it is with the whole house, and thus with every stone in it: as here it follows, *He that believeth shall not be confounded.*

3*dly*, There is next, *the building on this Foundation*. To be built on Christ, is plainly to believe in him. But in this the most deceive themselves; they hear of great privileges and happiness in Christ, and presently imagine it as all theirs, without any more ado; as that mad man of Athens, who wrote up all the ships that came into the haven for his own. We consider not what it is to believe in him, nor what is the necessity of this believing, in order that we may be partakers of the salvation that he hath wrought. It is not they that have heard of him, or that have some common knowledge of him, or that are able to discourse of him, and speak of his person and nature aright, but *they that believe in him*. Much of our knowledge is like that of the poor philosopher, who defineth riches exactly, and discourseth of their nature, but possesseth none; or we are as a geometrician, who can measure land exactly in all its dimensions, but possesses not a foot thereof. And truly it is but a lifeless unsavoury knowledge that men have of Christ by all books and study, till he reveal himself and persuade the heart to *believe in him*. Then, indeed, when it sees him, and is made one with him, it says of all the reports it heard, I heard much, yet *the half was not told me*. There is in lively faith, when it is infused into the soul, a clearer knowledge of Christ and his excellency than before, and with it a recumbency of

the soul upon him, as the foundation of its life and comfort; a resolving to rest on him, and not to depart from him upon any terms. Though I be beset on all hands, be accused by the Law, and by mine own conscience, and by Satan, and have nothing to answer for myself, yet here I will stay, for I am sure in him there is salvation, and no where else. All other refuges are but lies, (as it is expressed in the words before these in the Prophet,) poor base shifts that will do no good. God hath laid this precious Stone in Sion, for this very purpose, that weary souls may rest upon it; and why should not I make use of it according to His intention? He hath not forbid any, how wretched soever, to believe, but commands it, and Himself works it where he will, even in the vilest sinners.

Think it not enough that you know this Stone is laid, but see whether you are built on it by faith. The multitude of imaginary believers lie round about it, but they are never the better nor the surer for that, any more than stones that lie loose in heaps near unto a foundation, but are not joined to it.—There is no benefit to us by Christ, without union with him; no comfort in his riches, without an interest in them, and a title to them, by virtue of that union. Then is the soul right, when it can say, *He is altogether lovely*, and as the Spouse, (Cant. iii. 16,) *He is mine, my well-beloved.* This union is the spring of all spiritual consolations. And faith, by which we are thus united, is a Divine work. He that laid this Foundation in Sion with His own hand, works likewise with the same hand, faith in the heart, by which it is knit to this corner-stone. It is not so easy as we imagine, to believe. (See Eph. i. 19.) Many that think they believe, are, on the contrary, like those of whom the Prophet there speaks, as *hardened in sin* and carnally secure, whom he represents as in covenant with hell and death, walking in sin, and yet promising themselves impunity.

4*thly*, There is *the firmness* of this Building, namely, *He that believeth on him shall not be confounded.* This firmness is answerable to the nature of the foundation. Not only the whole frame, but every stone of it abideth sure. It is a simple

mistake, to judge the persuasion of perseverance to be self-presumption: they that have it are far from building it on themselves, but their foundation is that which makes them sure; because it doth not only remain firm itself, but indissolubly supports all that are once built on it. In the Prophet whence this is cited, it is, *Shall not make haste*, but the sense is one: they that are disappointed and ashamed in their hopes, run to and fro, and seek after some new resource; this they shall not need to do who come to Christ. The believing soul makes haste to Christ, but it never finds cause to hasten from him; and though the comfort it expects and longs for be for a time deferred, yet it gives not over, knowing that in due time it shall rejoice, and shall not have cause to blush and think shame of its confidence in him. David expresseth this distrust, by *making haste*, (Psal. xxxi. 22, and cxvi. 11,) *I was too hasty when I said so.* Hopes frustrated, especially where they have been raised high, and continued long, do reproach men with folly, and so shame them. And thus do all earthly hopes serve us, when we lean much upon them. We find usually those things that have promised us most content, pay us with vexation; and they not only prove broken reeds, deceiving our trust, but hurtful, running their broken splinters into our hand who leaned on them. This sure Foundation is laid for us, that our souls may be established on it, and be as *Mount Sion, that cannot be removed*, (Psal. cxxv. 1.) Such times may come as will shake all other supports, but this holds out against all, (Psal. xlvi. 2,) *Though the earth be removed, yet will not we fear.* Though the frame of the world were cracking about a man's ears, he may hear it unaffrighted who is built on this Foundation. Why then do we choose to *build upon the sand?* Believe it, wheresoever we lay our confidence and affection besides Christ, it shall sooner or later repent us and shame us; either happily in time, while we may yet change them for him, and have recourse to him; or miserably, when it is too late. Remember that we must die, and *must appear before the judgment-seat of God*, and that the things we doat on here, have neither power to stay

us here, nor have we power to take them along with us, nor, if we could, would they at all profit us there; and therefore, when we look back upon them all at parting, we shall wonder what fools we were to make so poor a choice. And in *that great day, wherein all faces shall gather blackness,* (Joel ii. 6,) and be filled with confusion, that have neglected to make Christ their stay when he was offered them, then it shall appear how happy they are who have trusted in him; *They shall not be confounded,* but shall *lift up their faces,* and be acquitted in him. In their present estate they may be exercised, but then *they shall not be confounded,* nor ashamed,—there is a double negation in the original,—*by no means;* they shall *be more than conquerors through him who hath loved them.* (Rom. viii. 37.)

5thly, The last thing observable is, the greatness and excellency of the work, intimated in that first word, *Behold,* which imports this work to be very remarkable, and calls the eyes to fix upon it.

The Lord is marvellous in the least of his works; but in this He hath manifested more of his wisdom and power, and let out more of his love to mankind, than in all the rest. Yet we are foolish, and childishly gaze about us upon trifles, and let this great work pass unregarded; we scarcely afford it half an eye. Turn your wandering eyes this way; look upon this *precious Stone,* and behold him, not in mere speculation, but so behold him as to lay hold on him. For we see he is therefore here set forth, that we may *believe on him, and so not be confounded;* that we may attain this blessed union, that cannot be dissolved. All other unions are dissoluble: a man may be plucked from his dwelling-house and lands, or they from him, though he have never so good a title to them; may be removed from his dearest friends, the husband from the wife, if not by other accidents in their lifetime, yet sure by death, the great dissolver of all those unions, and of that straitest one, of the soul with the body; but it can do nothing against this union, but, on the contrary, perfects it. *For I am persuaded,* says

St. Paul, *that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Rom. viii. 38, 39.)

There is a twofold mistake concerning faith: on the one side, they that are altogether void of it, abusing and flattering themselves in a vain opinion that they have it; and, on the other side, they that have it, misjudging their own condition, and so depriving themselves of much comfort and sweetness that they might find in their believing.

The former is the worse, and yet by far the commoner evil. What one says of wisdom is true of faith, *Many would seek after it, and attain it, if they did not falsely imagine that they have attained it already* *. There is nothing more contrary to the lively nature of faith, than for the soul not to be at all busied with the thoughts of its own spiritual condition; and yet this very character of unbelief passes with a great many for believing. They doubt not, that is, indeed, they consider not what they are; their minds are not at all on these things; are not awakened to seek diligently after Jesus, so as not to rest till they find him. They are well enough without him; it suffices them to hear there is such a one, but they ask not themselves, Is he mine, or no? Surely, if that be all—not to doubt, the brutes believe as well as they. It were better, out of all question, to be labouring under doubtings, if it be a more hopeful condition, to find a man groaning and complaining, than speechless, and breathless, and not stirring at all.

There be in spiritual doubtings two things; there is a solicitous care of the soul concerning its own estate, and a diligent inquiry into it, and that is laudable, being a true work of the Spirit of God; but the other thing in them is, perplexity and distrust arising from darkness and weakness in the soul. Where there is a great deal of smoke, and no clear flame, it argues

* Puto multos potuisse ad sapientiam pervenire, nisi putassent se jam pervenisse.—Seneca, *De Tranquillitate.*

much moisture in the matter, yet it witnesseth certainly that there is fire there; and, therefore, dubious questioning of a man concerning himself is a much better evidence than that senseless deadness which most take for believing. Men that know nothing in sciences have no doubts. He never truly believed who was not made first sensible and convinced of unbelief. This is the Spirit's first errand in the world, to *convince it of sin;* and the sin is this, that *they believe not,* (John xvi. 8, 9.) If the faith that thou hast, grew out of thy natural heart of itself, be assured it is but a weed. The right plant of faith is always set by God's own hand, and it is watered and preserved by Him; because exposed to many hazards, He watches it night and day. (Isa. xxvii. 3.) *I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day.*

Again, how impudent is it in the most to pretend they believe, while they wallow in profaneness! If faith unite the soul unto Christ, certainly it puts it into participation of his Spirit; *for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,* says St. Paul. This faith in Christ brings us into communion with God. Now *God is light,* says St. John, and he therefore infers, *If we say we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth,* (1 John i. 6.) The lie appears in our practice, an unsuitableness in our carriage; as one said of him that signed his verse wrong, *Fecit solœcismum manu.*

But there be imaginary believers who are a little more refined, who live after a blameless, yea, and a religious manner, as to their outward behaviour, and yet are but appearances of Christians, have not the living work of faith within, and all these exercises are *dead works,* in their hands. Amongst these, some may have such motions within them as may deceive themselves, while their external deportment deceives others; they may have some transient touches of desire to Christ, upon the unfolding of his excellencies in the preaching of the word, and upon some conviction of their own necessity, and may

conceive some joy upon thoughts of apprehending him; and yet all this proves but a vanishing fancy, an embracing of a shadow. And because men who are thus deluded meet not with Christ indeed, do not really find his sweetness, therefore, within a while, they return to the pleasures of sin, and *their latter end proves worse than their beginning*, (1 Pet. ii. 20.) Their hearts could not possibly be steadfast, because there was nothing to fix them on, in all that work wherein Christ himself was wanting.

But the truly believing soul that is brought unto Jesus Christ, and fastened upon him by God's own hand, abides stayed on him, and departs not. And in these persons, the very belief of the things that are spoken concerning Christ in the Gospel, the persuasion of Divine truth, is of a higher nature than the common consent that is called historical; they have another knowledge and evidence of *the mysteries of the kingdom*, than natural men can have. This is indeed the ground of all, the very thing that causes a man to rest upon Christ, when he hath a persuasion wrought in his heart by the Spirit of God, that Christ is an able Redeemer, a sufficient Saviour, *able to save all that come to him*, (Heb. vii. 25.) Then, upon this, the heart resolves upon that course: Seeing I am persuaded of this, that *whoso believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life*, (or, as it is here, *shall not be confounded*,) I am to deliberate no longer; this is the thing I must do, I must lay my soul upon him, upon one who is an Almighty Redeemer; and it does so. Now, these first actings of faith have in themselves an evidence that distinguishes them from all that is counterfeit, a light of their own, by which the soul wherein they are may discern them, and say, This is the right work of faith; especially when God shines upon the soul, and clears it in the discovery of His own work within it.

And further, they may find the influence of faith upon the affections, *purifying* them, as our Apostle says of it, (Acts xv. 9.) Faith knits the heart to a holy Head, a pure Lord, the Spring of purity, and therefore cannot choose but make it

pure; it is a beam from Heaven, that raises the mind to a heavenly temper. Although there are remains of sin in a believing soul, yet it is a hated, wearisome guest there. It exists there, not as its delight, but as its greatest grief and malady, which it is still lamenting and complaining of; it had rather be rid of it than gain a world. Thus the soul is purified from the love of sin.

So, then, where these are—a spiritual apprehension of the promises, a cleaving of the soul unto Christ, and such a delight in him as makes sin vile and distasteful, so that the heart is set against it, and, as the needle touched with the loadstone, is still turned towards Christ, and looks at him in all estates,—the soul that is thus disposed hath certainly interest in him; and therefore ought not to affect an humour of doubting, but to conclude, that how unworthy soever in itself, yet, being in Him, *it shall not be ashamed:* not only it shall never have cause to think shame of Him, but all its just cause of shame in itself shall be taken away; it shall be covered with His righteousness, and appear so before the Father. Who must not think, If my sins were to be set in order, and appear against me, how would my face be filled with shame! Though there were no more, if some thoughts that I am guilty of were laid to my charge, I were utterly ashamed and undone. Oh! there is nothing in myself but matter of shame, but yet in Christ there is more matter of glorying, who endured shame, that we might not be ashamed. We cannot distrust ourselves enough, nor trust enough in Him. Let it be right faith, and there can be no excess in believing. Though I have sinned against Him, and abused His goodness, yet I will not leave Him; *for whither should I go?* He, and none but He, *hath the words of eternal life.* Yea, though He, being so often offended, should threaten to leave me to the shame of my own follies, yet I will stay by Him, and wait for a better answer, and I know I shall obtain it: this assurance being given me for my comfort, that *whosoever believes in him shall not be ashamed.*

Ver. 7. Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious; but unto them who be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner;

Ver. 8. And a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed.

Besides all the opposition that meets faith within, in our hearts, it hath this without, that it rows against the great stream of the world's opinion; and therefore hath need, especially where it is very tender and weak, to be strengthened against that. The multitude of unbelievers, and the considerable quality of many of them in the world, are continuing causes of that very multitude; and the fewness of them that truly believe doth much to the keeping of them still few. And as this prejudice prevails with them that believe not, so it may sometimes assault the mind of a believer, when he thinks how many, and many of them wise men in the world, reject Christ. Whence can this be? Particularly the believing Jews, to whom this Epistle is addressed, might think it strange, that not only the Gentiles who were strangers to true religion, but their own nation, that was the select people of God, and had the light of His oracles kept in amongst them only, should yet, so many of them, yea, and the chief of them, be despisers and haters of Jesus Christ; and that they who were best versed in the Law, and so seemed best able to judge of the Messiah foretold, should have persecuted Christ all his life, and at last put him to a shameful death.

That they may know that this makes nothing against Him, nor ought to invalidate their faith at all, but that it rather indeed testifies with Christ, and so serves to confirm them in believing, the Apostle makes use of those prophetical Scriptures, which foretel the unbelief and contempt with which the most would entertain Christ withal; as old Simeon speaks of him, when he was come, agreeably to those former predictions, that he should be a *sign of contradiction*, (Luke ii. 34) that, as he

was the promised sign of salvation to believers, so he should be a very mark of enmities and contradictions to the unbelieving world. The passages the Apostle here useth, suit with his present discourse, and with the words cited from Isaiah in the former verse, continuing the resemblance of *a corner-stone:* they are taken partly from the one hundred and eighteenth Psalm, partly out of the eighth chapter of Isaiah.

Unto you, &c.] Wonder not that others refuse Him, but believe the more for that, because you see the word to be true even in their not believing of it; it is fulfilled and verified by their very rejecting of it as false.

And whatsoever are the world's thoughts concerning Christ, that imports not, for they know him not; but you that do indeed believe, I dare appeal to yourselves, to your own faith that you have of him, whether he is not precious to you, whether you do not really find him fully answerable to all that is spoken of him in the word, and to all that you have accordingly believed concerning him.

We are here to consider, I. The opposition of the persons: and then, II. The opposition of the things spoken of them.

I. The persons are opposed under the names of *believers*, and *disobedient* or unbelievers; for the word is so near, that it may be taken for unbelief, and it is by some so rendered: and the things are fully as near to each other as the words that signify them—*disobedience* and *unbelief*.

1. Unbelief is itself the grand disobedience. For *this is the work of God*, that which the Gospel mainly commands, *that ye believe* (John vi. 29); therefore the apostle calls it *the obedience of faith* (Rom. i. 5). And there is nothing indeed more worthy of the name of obedience, than the subjection of the mind to receive and to believe those supernatural truths which the Gospel teaches concerning Jesus Christ; to obey, so as to have, as the Apostle speaks, the *impression* of that Divine pattern stamped upon the heart; to have the heart delivered up, as the word there is, and laid under it to receive it (Rom. vi. 17.) The word here used for disobedience, signifies

properly *unpersuasion;* and nothing can more properly express the nature of unbelief than that; and it is the very nature of our corrupt hearts; we are *children of disobedience* or *unpersuasibleness*, (Ephes. ii. 2,) altogether incredulous towards God, who is Truth itself, and pliable as wax in Satan's hand, who works in such persons what he will, as there the Apostle expresses. They are most easy of belief to him, who is *the very father of lies*, as our Saviour calls him, (John viii. 44,) a *liar and a murderer from the beginning*, murdering by lies, as he did in the beginning.

2. Unbelief is radically all other disobedience; for all flows from unbelief. This we least of all are ready to suspect, but it is the bitter root of all that ungodliness that abounds amongst us. A right and lively persuasion of the heart concerning Jesus Christ, alters the whole frame of it, *casts down its high, lofty imaginations, and brings*, not only the outward actions, but the very *thoughts unto the obedience of Christ.* (2 Cor. x. 5.)

II. As for the things spoken concerning these disobedient unbelievers, these two testimonies, taken together, have in them these three things: 1. Their rejection of Christ; 2. Their folly; 3. Their misery in so doing.

1. Their rejection of Christ: they did not receive him, as the Father appointed and designed him, as the Foundation and *chief corner-stone*, but slighted him, and threw him by, as unfit for the building; and this did not only the ignorant multitude, but *the builders*, they that professed to have the skill and the office, or power, of building, the doctors of the law, the scribes and pharisees, and chief priests, who thought to carry the matter by the weight of their authority, as overbalancing the belief of those that followed Christ. *Have any of the rulers believed in him! But this people who know not the law, are cursed.* (John vii. 48, 49.)

We need not wonder, then, that not only the powers of the world are usually enemies to Christ, and that the contrivers of policies, those builders, leave out Christ in their building, but

that the pretended builders of the Church of God, though they use the name of Christ, and serve their turn with that, yet reject Himself, and oppose the power of his spiritual kingdom. There may be wit and learning, and much knowledge of the Scriptures, amongst those that are haters of the Lord Christ and of the power of godliness, and corrupters of the worship of God. It is the spirit of humility and obedience, and saving faith, that teach men to esteem Christ, and build upon him.

2. But the vanity and folly of those Builders' opinion appears in this, that they are overpowered by the great Architect of the Church: His purpose stands. Notwithstanding their rejection of Christ, he is still made the head corner-stone. They cast him away by their miscensures and reproaches put upon him, and by giving him up to be crucified and then cast into the grave, causing a stone to be rolled upon this *Stone* which they had so rejected, that it might appear no more, and so thought themselves sure. But even from thence did he arise, and *became the head of the corner.* The disciples themselves spake, you know, very doubtfully of their former hopes: *We believed this had been he that would have delivered Israel;* but he corrected their mistake, first by his word, shewing them the true method of that great work, *Ought not Christ to suffer first these things, and so enter into glory?* and then really, by making himself known to them as risen from the dead. When he was by these rejected, and lay lowest, then was he nearest his exaltation; as Joseph in the prison was nearest his preferment. And thus is it with the Church of Christ: when it is brought to the lowest and most desperate condition, then is deliverance at hand; it prospers and gains in the event, by all the practices of men against it. And as this Corner-stone was fitted to be such, by the very rejection of it, even so is it with the whole building; it rises the higher, the more men seek to demolish it.

3. The unhappiness of them that believe not is expressed in

the other word, *He is to them a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.* Because they will not be saved by him, they shall stumble and fall, and be broken to pieces on him, as it is in Isaiah, and in the Evangelists. But how is this? Is He who came to save, become a destroyer of men? He whose name is Salvation, proves He destruction to any? Not He himself: His primary and proper use is the former, to be a foundation for souls to build and rest upon; but they who, instead of building upon him, will stumble and fall on him, what wonder, being so firm a stone, though they be broken by their fall! Thus we see the mischief of unbelief, that as other sins disable the Law, this disables the very Gospel to save us, and turns life into death to us. And this is the misery, not of a few, but of many in Israel. Many that hear of Christ by the preaching of the Gospel, shall lament that ever they heard that sound, and shall wish to have lived and died without it, finding so great an accession to their misery, by the *neglect of so great salvation.* They are said to *stumble at the word*, because the things that are therein testified concerning Christ, they labour not to understand and prize aright; but either altogether slight them, and account them foolishness, or misconceive and pervert them.

The Jews stumbled at the meanness of Christ's birth and life, and the ignominy of his death, not judging of him according to the Scriptures; and we, in another way, think we have some kind of belief that he is the Saviour of the world, yet, not making the Scripture the rule of our thoughts concerning him, many of us undo ourselves, and stumble and break our necks upon this rock, mistaking Christ and the way of believing; looking on him as a Saviour at large, and judging that enough; not endeavouring to make him ours, and to embrace him upon the terms of that new covenant whereof he is Mediator.

Whereunto also they were appointed.] This the Apostle adds, for the further satisfaction of believers in this point, how it is that so many reject Christ, and stumble at him; telling them plainly, that the secret purpose of God is accomplished

in this. God having determined to glorify his justice on impenitent sinners, as He shews His rich mercy in them that believe. Here it were easier to lead you into a deep, than to lead you forth again. I will rather stand on the shore, and silently admire it, than enter into it. This is certain, that the thoughts of God are all not less just in themselves, than deep and unsoundable by us. His justice appears clear, in that man's destruction is always the fruit of his own sin. But to give causes of God's decrees without Himself, is neither agreeable with the primitive being of the nature of God, nor with the doctrine of the Scriptures. This is sure, that God is not bound to give us further account of these things, and we are bound not to ask it. Let these two words, as St. Augustine says, answer all, *What art thou, O man?* and, *O the depth!* (Rom. ix. 20; xi. 33.)

Our only sure way to know that our names are not in that black line, and to be persuaded that He hath chosen us to be saved by His Son, is this, to find that we have chosen Him, and are built on Him by faith, which is the fruit of His love, who first chooseth us; and that we may read in our esteem of Him.

He is precious.] Or, *your honour.* The difference is small. You account him your glory and your gain; he is not only *precious* to you, but *preciousness* itself. He is the thing that you make account of, your jewel, which if you keep, though you be robbed of all besides, you know yourselves to be rich enough.

To you that believe.] Faith is absolutely necessary to make this due estimate of Christ.

1. The most excellent things, while their worth is undiscerned and unknown, affect us not. Now, Faith is the proper seeing faculty of the soul, in relation to Christ: that inward light must be infused from above, to make Christ visible to us; without it, though he is beautiful, yet we are blind; and therefore cannot love him for that beauty. But by Faith, we are enabled to see Him who is *fairer than the children of men,*

(Psal. xlv. 2,) yea, to see in Him, *the glory of the only begotten Son of God*, (John i. 14;) and then it is not possible but to account him *precious*, and to bestow the entire affection of our hearts upon him. And if any one say to the soul, *What is thy beloved more than another?* (Cant. iii. 9,) it willingly lays hold on the question, and is glad of an opportunity to extol Him.

2. Faith, as it is that which discerns Christ, so it alone appropriates him, makes him our own. And these are the two reasons of our esteeming and affecting any thing, its own worth, and our interest in it. Faith begets this esteem of Christ by both: first it discovers to us His excellencies, which we could not see before; and then, it makes Him ours, gives us possession of whole Christ, all that He hath and is. As it is Faith that commends Christ so much, and describes His comeliness in that Song, so that word is the voice of Faith, that expresses propriety. *My well-beloved is mine, and I am His.* (Cant. ii. 16.) And these together make Him most precious to the soul. Having once possession of Him, then it looks upon all his sufferings as endured particularly for it, and the benefit of them all as belonging to itself. Sure, it will say, can I choose but account Him precious, who suffered shame that I might not be ashamed, and suffered death that I might not die; who took that bitter cup of the Father's wrath, and drank it out, that I might be free from it.

Think not that you believe, if your hearts be not taken up with Christ, if his love do not possess your soul, so that nothing is precious to you in respect of him; if you cannot despise and trample upon all advantages that either you have or would have, for Christ, and count them, with the great Apostle, *loss and dung in comparison of Him*, (Phil. iii. 8.) And if you do esteem Him, labour for increase of faith, that you may esteem Him more; for as faith grows, so will He still be more precious to you. And if you would have it grow, turn that spiritual eye frequently to Him, who is the proper object of it. For even they who are believers may possibly abate of their love

and esteem of Christ, by suffering faith to lie dead within them, and not using it in beholding and applying of Christ; and the world, or some particular vanities, may insensibly creep in, and get into the heart, and cost them much pains ere they can be thrust out again. But when they are daily reviewing those excellencies that are in Christ, which first persuaded their hearts to love Him, and are discovering still more and more of them, His love will certainly grow, and will chase away those follies that the world doats upon, as unworthy to be taken notice of.

Ver. 9. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

It is a matter of very much consolation and instruction to Christians to know their own estate, what they are as they are Christians. This *Epistle* is much and often upon this point for both those ends; that the reflecting upon their dignities in Christ may uphold them with comfort under suffering for Him; and also that it may lead them in doing and walking as becomes such a condition. Here it hath been represented to us by a building, a spiritual temple, and by a priesthood conformable to it.

The former is confirmed and illustrated by testimonies of Scripture in the preceding verses; the latter in this verse, in which, though it is not expressly cited, yet it is clear that the Apostle hath reference to Exod. xix. 5, 6, where this dignity of priesthood, together with the other titles here expressed, is ascribed to all the chosen people of God. It is there a promise made to the nation of the Jews, but under the condition of obedience; and therefore it is most fitly here applied by the Apostle to the believing Jews, to whom particularly he writes.

It is true, that the external priesthood of the Law is abolished by the coming of this great High Priest, Jesus Christ being the body of all those shadows; but this promised dignity of spiritual priesthood is so far from being annulled by

Christ, that it is altogether dependent on him, and therefore fails in those that reject Christ, although they be of that nation to which this promise was made. But it holds good in all, of all nations, that believe, and particularly, says the Apostle, *it is verified in you.* You that are believing Jews, by receiving Christ, receive withal this dignity.

As the Legal priesthood was removed by Christ's fulfilling all that is prefigured, so he was rejected by them that were, at his coming, in possession of that office: as the standing of that their priesthood was inconsistent with the revealing of Jesus Christ, so they who were then in it, being ungodly men, their carnal minds had a kind of antipathy against him. Though they pretended themselves builders of the Church, and by their calling ought to have been so, yet they threw away the Foundation-stone that God had chosen and designed, and in rejecting it, manifested that they themselves were rejected of God. But on the contrary, you who have laid your souls on Christ by believing, have this your choosing him as a certain evidence that God hath chosen you to be his *peculiar people*, yea, to be so dignified as to be a *kingly priesthood*, through Christ.

We have here to consider, 1. The estate of Christians, in the words that here describe it; 2. The opposition of it to the state of unbelievers; 3. The end of it.

First. The state of Christians, *A chosen generation.* So in Psalm xxiv. The Psalmist there speaks first of God's universal sovereignty, then of His peculiar choice. *The earth is the Lord's*, (*verse* 1,) but there is a select company appointed for His *holy mountain*, there described; and the description is closed thus, *This is the generation of them that seek him.* Thus, Deut. x. 14, 15, and Exod. xix. 5, whence this passage is taken, *For all the earth is mine*, and that nation which is a figure of the elect of all nations, God's *peculiar*, beyond all others in the world. As men who have great variety of possessions, yet have usually their special delight in some one beyond all the rest, and choose to reside most in it,

and bestow most expense on it to make it pleasant; so doth the Lord of the whole earth choose out to Himself, from the rest of the world, a number that are *a chosen generation.*

Choosing, here, is the work of effectual calling, or the severing of believers from the rest; for it signifies a difference in their present estate, as do likewise the other words joined with it. But this election is altogether conformable to that of God's eternal decree, and is no other than the execution or performance of it; God's framing of this His building being just according to the idea of it which was in His mind and purpose before all time; it is the drawing forth and investing of those into this Christian, this kingly priesthood, whose names were expressly written up for it in the book of life.

Generation.] This imports them to be of one race or stock. As the Israelites, who were by outward calling the children of God, were all the *seed of Abraham according to the flesh;* so they that believe in the Lord Jesus are *children of the promise* (Gal. iv. 28); and all of them are, by their new birth, one people or generation. They are of one nation, belonging to the same blessed land of promise, all citizens of the New Jerusalem, yea, all children of the same family, whereof Jesus Christ, the *root of Jesse,* is the stock, who is the great *King,* and the *great High Priest.* And thus they are a *royal priesthood.* There is no devolving of His royalty or priesthood on any other, as it is in Himself; for His proper dignity is supreme and incommunicable, and there is no succession in His order: He *lives for ever,* and *is priest for ever,* (Psal. cx. 4,) and *king for ever* too, (Psal. xlv. 6.) But they that are descended from Him, do derive from Him, by that new original, this double dignity, in that way that they are capable of it, to be likewise kings and priests, as He is both. They are of the seed royal, and of the holy seed of the priesthood, inasmuch as they partake of a new life from Christ. Thus, in Rev. i. 5, 6, first, there is His own dignity expressed, then his dignifying us: *Who is* Himself *the first-begotten among the dead, and the*

prince of the kings of the earth; and then it follows, *And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.*

A royal priesthood.] That the dignity of believers is expressed by these two together, by *priesthood* and *royalty*, teaches us the worth and excellency of that holy function taken properly, and so, by analogy, the dignity of the Ministry of the Gospel, which God hath placed in his Church, instead of the Priesthood of the Law; for therefore doth this title of spiritual priesthood fitly signify a great privilege and honour that Christians are promoted to, and it is joined with that of kings, because the proper office of priesthood was so honourable. Before it was established in one family, the chief, the first-born of each family, had a right to this, as a special honour; and amongst the heathens, in some places, their princes and greatest men, yea, their kings, were their priests; and universally, the performing of their holy things was an employment of great honour and esteem amongst them. Though human ambition hath strained this consideration too high, to the favouring and founding of a monarchical prelacy in the Christian world, yet that abuse of it ought not to prejudge us of this due and just consequence from it, that the holy functions of God's house have very much honour and dignity in them. And the Apostle, we see, (2 Cor. iii.) prefers the ministry of the Gospel to the priesthood of the Law. So then, they mistake much, who think it a disparagement to men that have some advantages of birth or wit more than ordinary, to bestow them thus, and who judge the meanest persons and things good enough for this high calling. Surely this conceit cannot have place, but in an unholy, irreligious mind, that hath either no thoughts, or very mean thoughts of God. If they who are called to this holy service would themselves consider this aright, it would not puff them up, but humble them: comparing their own worthlessness with this great work, they would wonder at God's dispensation, that should thus have honoured them. As St. Paul speaks of himself, (Ephes. iii. 8,) *Unto me, who am*

less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, &c., so, the more a man rightly extols this his calling, the more he humbles himself under the weight of it ; and this would make him very careful to walk more suitably to it in eminency of holiness, for in that consists its true dignity.

There is no doubt that this Kingly Priesthood is the common dignity of all believers: *this honour have all the saints.* They are kings, have victory and dominion given them over the powers of darkness and the lusts of their own hearts, that held them captive, and domineered over them before. Base, slavish lusts, not born to command, yet are the hard taskmasters of unrenewed minds; and there is no true subduing of them, but by the power and Spirit of Christ. They may be quiet for awhile in a natural man, but they are then but asleep ; as soon as they awake again, they return, to hurry and drive him with their wonted violence. Now this is the benefit of receiving the kingdom of Christ into a man's heart, that it makes him a king himself. All the subjects of Christ are kings, not only in regard of that pure crown of glory they hope for, and shall certainly attain, but in the present, they have a kingdom which is the pledge of that other, overcoming the World, and Satan, and themselves, by the power of faith. *Mens bona regnum possidet,* A good mind is a kingdom in itself, it is true ; but there is no mind truly good, but that wherein Christ dwells. There is not any kind of spirit in the world so noble as that spirit that is in a Christian, the very Spirit of Jesus Christ, that great king, the *Spirit of glory,* as our Apostle calls it below, (ch. iv). This is a sure way to ennoble the basest and poorest among us. This royalty takes away all attainders, and leaves nothing of all that is past to be laid to our charge, or to dishonour us.

Believers are not shut out from God, as they were before, but, being in Christ, are brought near unto Him, and have free access to the throne of His grace. (Heb. x. 21, 22.) They resemble, in their spiritual state, the Legal priesthood very

clearly, I. In their Consecration; II. In their Service; and, III. In their Laws of Living.

I. In their Consecration. The levitical priests were, 1. washed; therefore this is expressed, (Rev. i. 5,) *He hath washed us in his blood*, and then follows, *and hath made us kings and priests*. There would have been no coming near unto God in his holy services as his priests, unless we had been cleansed from the guiltiness and pollution of our sins. This that pure and purifying Blood doth; and it alone. No other laver can do it; no water but that *fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness*. (Zech. xiii. 1.) No blood, none of all that blood of Legal sacrifices, (Heb. ix. 12,) but only the blood of that spotless Lamb that *takes away the sins of the world*. (John i. 29.) So with this, 2. we have that other ceremony of the priest's consecration, which was by sacrifice, as well as by washing; for Christ at once offered up himself as our sacrifice, and let out his blood for our washing. With good reason is that prefixed there, (Rev. i. 5,) *He hath loved us*, and then it follows, *washed us in his blood*. That precious stream of his heart-blood, that flowed for our washing, told clearly that it was a heart full of unspeakable love that was the source of it. 3. There is anointing, namely, the graces of the Spirit, conferred upon believers, flowing unto them from Christ. For *it is of His fulness that we all receive grace for grace*; (John i. 16;) and the Apostle St. Paul says, (2 Cor. i. 16,) that *we are established and anointed in Christ*. It was poured on Him as our head, and runs down from Him unto us; He the *Christ*, and we *Christians*, as partakers of his anointing. The consecrating oil of the priests was made of the richest ointments and spices, to shew the preciousness of the graces of God's Spirit which are bestowed on these spiritual priests; and as that holy oil was not for common use, nor for any other persons to be anointed withal, save the priests only, so is the Spirit of grace a peculiar gift to believers. Others might have costly ointments amongst the Jews, but none of that same sort

with the consecration-oil. Natural men may have very great gifts of judgment, and learning, and eloquence, and moral virtues, but they have none of this precious oil, namely, the Spirit of Christ communicated to them; no, all their endowments are but common and profane. That holy oil signified particularly, eminency of light and knowledge in the priests; therefore, in Christians there must be light. They that are grossly ignorant of spiritual things are surely not of this order; this anointing is said *to teach us all things* (1 John ii. 27). That holy oil was of a most fragrant sweet smell, by reason of its precious composition; but much more sweet is the smell of that Spirit wherewith believers are anointed, those several odoriferous graces, which are the ingredients of their anointing oil, that heavenly-mindedness, and meekness, and patience, and humility, and the rest, that diffuse a pleasant scent into the places and societies where they come; their words, their actions, and their deportment, smelling sweet of them. 4. The garments wherein the priests were inaugurate, and which they were after to wear in their services, are outshined by that purity and holiness wherewith all the Saints are adorned; but still more by that imputed righteousness of Christ, *those pure robes* that are put upon them, wherein they appear before the Lord, and are accepted in His sight. These priests are indeed *clothed with righteousness*, according to that of the Psalmist (Psal. cxxxii. 9). 5. The priests were to have the offerings put into their hands; from thence, *filling of the hand* signifies consecrating to the priesthood. And thus doth Jesus Christ, who is the consecrator of these priests, put into their hands, by his Spirit, the offerings they are to present unto God. He furnishes them with prayers, and praises, and all other oblations, that are to be offered by them; he gives them themselves, which they are to offer a living sacrifice, rescuing them from the usurped possession of Satan and sin.

II. Let us consider their Services, which were divers. To name the chief, 1. They had charge of the sanctuary, and the vessels of it, and the lights, and were to keep the lamps burning.

Thus the heart of every Christian is made a temple to the Holy Ghost, and he himself, as a priest consecrated unto God, is to keep it diligently, and the furniture of Divine Grace in it; to have the light of spiritual knowledge within him, and to nourish it by drawing continually new supplies from Jesus Christ. 2. The priests were to bless the people. And truly it is this spiritual priesthood, *the Elect*, that procure blessings upon the rest of the world, and particularly on the places where they live. They are daily to offer the incense of prayer, and other spiritual sacrifices unto God, as the Apostle expresseth it above, (verse 5,) not to neglect those holy exercises together or apart. And as the priests offered it not only for themselves, but for the people, so Christians are to extend their prayers, and to entreat the blessings of God for others, especially for the public estate of the Church. As the Lord's priests, they are to offer up those praises to God, that are His due from the other creatures, which praise Him indeed, yet cannot do it after the manner in which these priests do; therefore they are to offer as it were their sacrifices for them, as the priests did for the people. And because the most of men neglect to do this, and cannot do it indeed because they are unholy, and are not of this priesthood, therefore should they be so much the more careful of it, and diligent in it. How few of those, whom the Heavens call to by their light and revolution that they enjoy, do offer that sacrifice which becomes them, by acknowledging *the glory of God which the Heavens declare!* This, therefore, is as it were put into the hands of these priests, namely, the godly, to do.

III. Let us consider their course of life. We shall find rules given to the legal priests, stricter than to others, of avoiding legal pollutions, &c. And from these this spiritual priesthood must learn an exact, holy conversation, keeping themselves from the pollutions of the world; as here it follows: *A holy nation*, and that of necessity; if a priesthood, then holy. They are purchased indeed to be *a peculiar treasure* to God, (Exod. xix. 5,) purchased at a very high rate. He spared not His

only Son, nor did the Son spare himself: so that these priests ought to be the Lord's peculiar portion. All believers are His *clergy;* and as they are His portion, so He is theirs. The priests had no assigned inheritance among their brethren, and the reason is added, for *the Lord is their portion;* and truly so they needed not envy any of the rest, they had the choicest of all, the Lord of all. Whatsoever a Christian possesses in the world, yet, being of this spiritual priesthood, he is *as if he possessed it not,* (1 Cor. vii. 30,) lays little account on it. That which his mind is set upon, is, how he may enjoy God, and find clear assurance that he hath Him for his portion.

It is not so mean a thing to be a Christian as we think; it is a holy, an honourable, a happy state. Few of us can esteem it, or do labour to find it so. No, we know not these things, our hearts are not on them, to make this dignity and happiness sure to our souls. Where is that true greatness of mind, and that holiness to be found, that become those who are *kings* and *priests* unto God? that contempt of earthly things, and minding of Heaven that should be in such? But surely, as many as find themselves indeed partakers of these dignities, will study to live agreeably to them, and will not fail to love that Lord Jesus who hath purchased all this for them, and exalted them to it; yea, humbled himself to exalt them.

Now, as to the Opposition of the estate of Christians to that of unbelievers. We best discern, and are most sensible of the evil or good of things by comparison. In respect of outward condition, how many be there that are vexing themselves with causeless murmurings and discontents, who, if they would look upon the many in the world that are in a far meaner condition than they, would be cured of that evil! It would make them not only content, but cheerful and thankful. But the difference here expressed, is far greater and more considerable than any that can be in outward things. Though the estate of a Christian is very excellent and precious, and, when rightly valued, hath enough in itself to commend it, yet it doth and ought to raise our esteem of it the higher, when we compare it both with

the misery of our former condition, and with the continuing misery of those that abide still, and are left to perish in that woful estate. We have here both these parallels. The happiness and dignity to which they are chosen and called, is opposed to the rejection and misery of them that continue unbelievers and rejecters of Christ.

Not only natural men, but even they that have a spiritual life in them, when they forget themselves, are subject to look upon the things that are before them with a natural eye, and to think hardly, or at least doubtfully, concerning of God's dispensations, beholding the flourishing and prosperities of the ungodly, together with their own sufferings and distresses. Thus, Psal. lxxxiii. But when they turn the other side of the medal, and view them with a right eye, and by a true light, they are no longer abused with those appearances. When they consider unbelievers *as strangers*, yea, *enemies to God*, and slaves to Satan, held fast in the chains of their own impenitency and unbelief, and by these bound over to eternal death, and then see themselves called to the liberties and dignities of the Sons of God, partakers of the honour of the only-begotten Son, on whom they have believed, made by him *kings and priests unto God the Father*, then, surely, they have other thoughts. It makes them no more envy, but pity the ungodly, and account all their pomp, and all their possessions, what they are indeed, no other than a glistening misery, and account themselves happy in all estates. It makes them say with David, *The lines have fallen to me in a pleasant place, I have a goodly heritage.* It makes them digest all their sufferings and disgraces with patience, yea, with joy, and think more of praising than complaining, more of shewing forth His honour who hath so honoured them; especially, when they consider the freeness of His grace, that it was that alone which made the difference, calling them altogether undeservedly from that same darkness and misery in which unbelievers are deservedly left.

Now the Third thing here to be spoken to, is, the *End* of their calling, *to shew forth his praise*, &c. And that we may the

more prize the reasonableness of that happy estate to which God hath exalted them, it is expressed in other terms; which therefore we will first consider, and then the end.

To magnify the grace of God the more, we have here, 1. Both the terms of this motion or change,—*from whence* and *to what* it is; 2. The principle of it, the calling of God.

1. For the terms of this motion: *From darkness.* There is nothing more usual, not only in Divine, but in human writings, than to borrow outward sensible things to express things intellectual; and amongst such expressions there is none more frequent than that of *light* and *darkness* transferred, to signify the good and the evil estate of man, as sometimes for his outward prosperity or adversity, but especially for things proper to his mind. The mind is called *light*, because the seat of truth, and truth is most fitly called *light*, being the chief beauty and ornament of the rational world, as light is of the visible. And as the light, because of that its beauty, is a thing very refreshing and comfortable to them that behold it, (as Solomon says, *It is a pleasant thing to see the sun*,) so is truth a most delightful thing to the soul that rightly apprehends it.

This may help us to conceive of the spiritual sense in which it is here taken. The estate of lost mankind is indeed nothing but darkness, being destitute of all spiritual truth and comfort, and tending to utter and everlasting darkness.

And it is so, because by sin the soul is separate from God, who is the first and highest light, the primitive truth. As he is light in himself, (as the Apostle St. John tells us, *God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all*, expressing the excellency and purity of his nature,) so He is light relatively to the soul of man: *The Lord is my light*, says David (Psalm xxvii. 1).

And the soul being made capable of Divine light, cannot be happy without it. Give it what other light you will, still it is in darkness, so long as it is without God, he being the peculiar

light and life of the soul. And as truth is united with the soul in apprehending it, and light with the visive faculty, so, in order that the soul may have God as its light, it must of necessity be in union with God. Now sin hath broken that union, and so cut off the soul from its light, and plunged it into spiritual darkness.

Hence all that confusion and disorder in the soul, which is ever the companion of darkness:—*Tohu vabohu*, as it was at first, when *darkness was on the face of the deep* (Gen. i. 2). Being ignorant of God and of ourselves, it follows that we love not God, *because we know him not;* yea, (though we think it a hard word,) we are *haters of God;* for not only doth our darkness import ignorance of Him, but an enmity to Him, because He is light, and we are darkness. And being ignorant of ourselves, not seeing our own vileness, because we are in the dark, we are pleased with ourselves, and having left God, do love ourselves instead of God. Hence arise all the wickednesses of our hearts and lives, which are no other than, instead of obeying and pleasing God, a continual sacrificing to those *Gillulim*, those base dunghill-gods, our own lusts. For this, the Apostle Paul gives as the root of all evil dispositions (2 Tim. iii. 2); because, in the first place, *lovers of themselves*, therefore *covetous, boasters, proud,* &c., and *lovers of pleasures more than of God.* And this self-love cannot subsist without gross ignorance, by which our minds are so darkened, that we cannot withal see what we are; for if we did, it were not possible but we should be far of another mind, very far out of loving and liking with ourselves. Thus our souls being filled with darkness, are likewise full of uncleanness, as that goes along too with darkness; they are not only dark as dungeons, but withal filthy as dungeons use to be. So, (Ephes. iv. 18,) *Understandings darkened, alienated from the life of God;* and therefore, (it is added, ver. 19,) *they give themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.* Again, in this state they have no light of solid comfort. Our great

comfort here is not in any thing present, but in hope; now, being *without Christ, and without God,* we are *without hope.* (Eph. ii. 12.)

And as the estate from whence we are called by grace is worthily called *darkness,* so that to which it calls us, deserves as well the name of *light.* Christ, likewise, who came to work our deliverance, is frequently so called in Scripture; as John i. 9, *That was the true light,* and elsewhere; not only in regard of his own nature, being God equal with the Father, and therefore light, as he is *God of God,* and therefore *Light of Light;* but relatively to men, as John i. 4, *That life was the light of men.* So, he is styled *The Word,* and *the Wisdom of the Father,* not only in regard of his own knowledge, but as revealing Him unto us. (See John i. 18, and 1 Cor. i. 18, compared with v. 30.) And he is styled by Malachi, (ch. iv. 2,) *The Sun of Righteousness.* Now, the sun is not only a luminous body, but a luminary, giving light unto the world. (Gen. i. 15.)

He is our *light,* opposed to all kind of darkness. He is so, in opposition to the dark shadows of the ceremonial law, which possibly are here meant, as part of that darkness from which the Apostle writes that these Jews were delivered also by the knowledge of Christ: when he came, *the day broke and the shadows flew away.* He is our light, as opposed likewise to the darkness of the Gentile superstitions and idolatries; therefore these two are joined by old Simeon, *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel* (Luke ii. 34). And to all who believe among either, he is light as opposed to the ignorance, slavery, and misery, of their natural estate, teaching them by his spirit the things of God, and reuniting them with God, who is the light of the soul. *I am,* says he, *the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness.* (John viii. 12.)

And it is that mysterious union of the soul with God in Christ, which a natural man so little understands, that is the cause of all that spiritual light of grace, that a believer does enjoy. There is no right knowledge of God to man once fallen

from it, but in his Son; no comfort in beholding God, but through Him; nothing but just anger and wrath to be seen in God's looks, but through Him, *in whom He is well pleased.* The Gospel shews us *the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God,* but it is *in the face of Jesus Christ.* (2 Cor. iv. 6.) Therefore, the kingdom of light, as opposed to that of darkness, is called *The kingdom of his dear Son,* or, the *Son of his love.* (Col. i. 13.)

There is a spirit of light and knowledge flows from Jesus Christ into the souls of believers, that acquaints them with the *mysteries of the kingdom of God,* which cannot otherwise be known. And this spirit of knowledge is withal a spirit *of holiness;* for purity and holiness are likewise signified by this *light.* He removed that huge dark body of sin that was betwixt us and the Father, and eclipsed Him from us. The light of his countenance *sanctifieth by truth;* it is a light that hath heat with it, and hath influence upon the affections, warms them towards God and Divine things. This darkness here is indeed the shadow of death, and they that are without Christ are said, till he visit them, *to sit in darkness and in the shadow of death* (Luke i. 79); so, this *Light* is *life* (John i. 4); it doth enlighten and enliven, begets new actions and motions in the soul. The right notion that a man hath of things as they are, works upon him, and stirs him accordingly; thus this light discovers a man to himself, and lets him see his own natural filthiness, makes him loathe himself and fly from himself,—run out of himself. And the excellency he sees in God and his Son Jesus Christ, by this new light, inflames his heart with their love, fills him with estimation of the Lord Jesus, and makes the world, and all things in it that he esteemed before, base and mean in his eyes. Then from this light arise *spiritual joy* and *comfort,* which are frequently signified by this expression, as in that verse of the Psalmist, (the latter clause expounds the former,) *Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.* (Psal. xcvii. 11.) As this *kingdom of God's dear Son,* that is, this kingdom of *light,* hath righteousness in it, so it

hath *peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.* (Rom. xiv. 17.) It is a false prejudice the world hath taken up against religion, that it is a sour, melancholy thing; there is no truly lightsome comfortable life but it. All others, have they what they will, live in darkness; and is not that truly sad and comfortless? Would you think it a pleasant life, though you had fine clothes, and good diet, never to see the sun, but still to be kept in a dungeon with them? Thus are they who live in worldly honour and plenty, but still without God; they are in continual darkness, with all their enjoyments.

It is true the light of believers is not here perfect, and therefore neither is their joy perfect; it is sometimes overclouded; but the comfort is this, that it is an everlasting light, it shall never go out in darkness, as it is said (in Job xviii. 5) *the light of the wicked shall;* and it shall within awhile be perfected: there is a bright morning without a cloud that shall arise. The Saints have not only light to lead them in their journey, but much purer light at home, *an inheritance in light.* (Col. i. 12.) The land where their inheritance lieth is full of light, and their inheritance itself is light; for the vision of God for ever is that inheritance. That city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it, for *the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* (Rev. xxi. 23.) As we said, that Increated Light is the happiness of the soul, the beginnings of it are our happiness begun; they are beams of it sent from above, to lead us to the fountain and fulness of it. *With Thee,* says David, *is the fountain of life, and in Thy light shall we see light.* (Psal. xxxvi. 9.)

There are two things spoken of this Light, to commend it—*His marvellous light;* that it is after a peculiar manner *God's,* and then that it is *marvellous.*

All light is from Him, the light is sense, and that of reason; therefore He is called the *Father of lights* (Jam. i. 17). But this *light of grace* is after a peculiar manner His, being a light above the reach of nature, infused into the soul in a supernatural way, the light of the elect world, where God specially and

graciously resides. Natural men may know very much in natural things, and, it may be, may know much in supernatural things, after a natural manner. They may be full of school-divinity, and be able to discourse of God and his Son Christ, and the mystery of redemption, *&c.*, and yet, they want this peculiar light, by which Christ is made known to believers. They may speak of him, but it is in the dark; they see him not, and therefore they love him not. The light they have, is as the light of some things that shine only in the night, a cold glow-worm light, that hath no heat with it at all. Whereas a soul that hath some of *this* light, God's peculiar light, communicated to it, sees Jesus Christ, and loves and delights in him, and walks with him. A little of this light is worth a great deal, yea, more worth than all that other common, speculative, and discoursing knowledge that the greatest doctors can attain unto. It is of a more excellent kind and original; it is from Heaven, and you know that one beam of the sun is of more worth than the light of ten thousand torches together. It is a pure, undecaying, heavenly light, whereas the other is gross and earthly, (be it never so great,) and lasts but awhile. Let us not therefore think it incredible, that a poor unlettered Christian may know more of God in the best kind of knowledge, than any the wisest and most learned natural man can do; for the one knows God only by man's light, the other knows Him by His own light, and that is the only right knowledge. As the sun cannot be seen but by its own light, so neither can God be savingly known, but by His own revealing.

Now this light being so peculiarly *God's*, no wonder if it be *marvellous*. The common light of the world is so, though, because of its commonness, we think not so of it. The Lord is marvellous in wisdom, and in power in all His works of creation and providence; but above all, in the workings of His grace. This light is unknown to the world, and so *marvellous* in the rareness of beholding it, that there be but a few that partake of it. And to them that see it is *marvellous;* because in it they see so many excellent things that they knew not before:

as if a man were born and brought up till he came to the years of understanding, in a dungeon, where he had never seen light, and were brought forth on a sudden; or, not to need that imagination, take the man that was born blind, at his first sight, after Christ had cured him,—what wonder, think we, would seize upon him, to behold on a sudden the beauty of this visible world, especially of that sun, and that light that makes it both visible and beautiful! But much more matter of admiration is there in this light, to the soul that is brought newly from the darkness of corrupt nature! Such persons see as it were a new world, and in it such wonders of the rich grace and love of God, such matchless worth in Jesus Christ the Sun of Righteousness, that their souls are filled with admiration. And if this light of *grace* be so *marvellous*, how much more *marvellous* shall the light of *glory* be in which it ends!

Hence, 1. Learn to esteem highly of the Gospel, in which this light shines unto us: the Apostle calls it, therefore, *The glorious Gospel.* (2 Cor. iv. 4.) Surely we have no cause to be ashamed of it, but of ourselves, that we are so unlike it.

2. Think not, you who are grossly ignorant of God, and his Son Christ, and the mysteries of salvation, that you have any portion as yet in His grace; for the first character of His renewed image in the soul, as it was His first work in the material world, is light. What avails it us to live in the noonday light of the Gospel, if our hearts be still shut against it, and so within we be nothing but darkness?—as a house that is close shut up, and hath no entry for light, though it is day without, still it is night within.

3. Consider your delight in the works of darkness, and be afraid of that great condemnation, *This is the condemnation of the world, that light is come into it, and men love darkness rather than light.* (John iii. 19.)

4. You that are indeed partakers of this happy change, let your hearts be habitations of light. *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.* (Eph. v. 11.) Study much to increase in spiritual light and

knowledge, and withal in holiness and obedience: if your light be this light of God, truly spiritual light, these will accompany it. Consider the rich love of God, and account His light *marvellous*, as in itself, so in this respect, that He hath bestowed it on you. And seeing *you were once darkness, but now are light in the Lord*, I beseech you,—nay the Apostle, and in him the Spirit of God beseeches you, *Walk as children of the light.* (Eph. v. 8.)

But to proceed to speak to the other parts of this verse, as to the Principle of this change, *the calling of God.*

It is known and confessed to be a chief point of wisdom in a man, to consider what he is, from whom he hath his being, and to what end. When a Christian hath thought on this in his natural being, as he is a man, he hath the same to consider over again of his spiritual being, as he is a Christian, and so a new creature. And in this notion, all the three are very clearly represented to him in these words, 1. What he is, first, by these titles of dignity in the first words of this verse; and again, by an estate of light in the last clause of it. 2. Whence a Christian hath this excellent being, is very clearly expressed here, *He hath called you.* That God, who is the author of all kind of being, hath given you this, *called you from darkness to His marvellous light.* If you be *a chosen generation*, it is He that hath *chosen you*, (ch. i. 2.) If you be a *royal priesthood*, you know that it is He that hath anointed you. If *a holy nation*, He hath sanctified you. (John xvii. 17.) If *a peculiar* or *purchased people*, it is He that hath bought you. (1 Cor. vi. 20.) All are included in this calling, and they are all one thing. 3. To what end,—to *shew forth His praises.* Of the first of these, in all the several expressions of it, we have spoken before; now are to be considered the other two.

He hath called you.] Those who live in the society, and profess the faith of Christians, are called unto *light*, the light of the Gospel that shines in the Church of God. Now, this is no small favour and privilege, while many people are left in

darkness and in the shadow of death, to have this light arise upon us, and to be in the region of it, the Church, the *Goshen* of the world; for by this outward light we are invited to this happy state of saving inward light, and the former is here to be understood as the means of the latter. These Jews who were called to the profession of the Christian faith, to whom our Apostle writes, were even in that respect called unto a light hidden from the rest of their nation, and from many other nations in the world: but because the apostle doth undoubtedly describe here the lively spiritual state of true believers, therefore this Calling doth further import the effectual work of conversion, making the daylight of salvation, not only without, but within them, *the day-star to arise in their hearts*, as he speaks, 2 Eph. i. 19. When the sun is arisen, yet if a man be lying fast in a dark prison, and in a deep sleep too, it is not day to him; he is not *called to light*, till some one open the doors, and awake him, and bring him forth to it. This God doth, in the calling here meant. That which is here termed *Calling*, in regard of the way of God's working with the soul, is, in regard of the power of it, called a *rescuing* and *bringing forth* of the soul: so the Apostle St. Paul speaks of it (Col. i. 13): *Delivered from the power of darkness, and translated to the kingdom of his dear Son.* That delivering and translating is this *calling;* and it is *from the power of darkness*, a forcible power, that detains the soul captive. As there are chains of eternal darkness upon damned spirits, which shall never be taken off, wherein they are *said to be reserved to the judgment of the great day*, so there are chains of spiritual darkness upon the unconverted soul, that can be taken off by no other hand but the powerful hand of God. He calls the sinner to *come forth*, and withal causes by the power of that His voice, the bolts and fetters to fall off, and enables the soul to *come forth* into the light. It is an operative word that effects what It bids, as that in the creation, *He said, Let there be light, and it was light*, to which the Apostle hath reference, (2 Cor. iv. 6,) when he says, *God, who commanded*

the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into your hearts. God calls man. He works with him indeed as with a reasonable creature, but surely He likewise works as Himself, as an Almighty Creator. He works strongly, and sweetly, with an Almighty easiness. One man may call another to this light, and if there be no more he may call long enough to no purpose; as they tell of Mahomet's miracle that misgave,—he called a mountain to come to him, but it stirred not. But His call, that shakes and removes the mountains, doth, in a way known to Himself, turn and wind the heart which way He pleaseth. *The voice of the Lord is powerful and full of majesty.* (Psal. xxix. 4.) If he speaks once to the heart, it cannot choose but follow Him, and yet most willingly chooses that. The workings of grace (as oil, to which it is often compared) do insensibly and silently penetrate, and sink into the soul, and dilate themselves through it. That word of His own calling, disentangles the heart from all its nets, as it did the disciples from theirs, to follow Christ. That call which brought St. Matthew presently from His receipt of custom, puts off the heart from all its customs, and receipts too; makes it reject gains and pleasures, and all that hinders it, to go after Christ. And it is a call that touches the soul so as the touch of Elijah's mantle, that made Elisha follow him. *Go back,* said he, *for what have I done unto thee?* Yet he had done so much as made him forsake all to go with him. (1 Kings xix. 20.) And this every believer is most ready to acknowledge, who knows what the rebellion of his heart was, and what his miserable love of darkness was, that the gracious yet mighty call of God was what drew him out of it; and therefore he willingly assents to that which is the *Third* thing to be spoken of, that it becomes him, as being the End of his Calling, to *shew forth His praise,* who hath so mercifully and so powerfully called him, from so miserable, to so happy an estate.

For 1. This is God's end in calling us, to communicate His goodness to us, that so the glory of it may return to Himself. The highest Agent cannot work but for the highest end; so

that, as the Apostle speaks, when God would confirm his covenant by an oath, *He sware by Himself*, because He could swear by no greater, so, in all things, He must be the end of His own actions, because there is no greater, nor better end, yea, none by infinite odds so great, or good. Particularly in the calling and exalting of a number of lost mankind to so great honour and happiness, both in designing that great work, and in performing it, He aims at the opening up, and declaring of His *rich grace*, for the glory of it; as the Apostle St. Paul tells us, once and again (Ephes. i. 6, 12).

2. As this is God's end it ought to be ours, and therefore ours because it is His. And for this very purpose, both here and elsewhere, are we put in mind of it, that we may be true to His end, and intend it with Him. This is His purpose in calling us, and therefore it is our great duty, being so called—to declare his praises. All things and persons shall pay this tribute, even those who are most unwilling; but the happiness of His chosen, is, that they are active in it, others are passive only. Whereas the rest have His praise wrested from them, they do declare it cheerfully, as the glorious angels do. As the Gospel brings them glad tidings of peace from God, and declares to them that love and mercy that is in Him, they smother it not, but answer it; they declare it, and set forth the glory of it, with their utmost power and skill.

There be in this two things, 1. Not only that they speak upon all occasions to the advantage of His grace, but that the frame of their actions be such as doth tend to the exalting of God. And 2. That in those actions they do intend this end, or set up this for their aim.

1. Their words and actions being conformable to that high and holy estate to which they are called, do commend and praise their Lord, who hath called them to it. The virtues which are in them, tell us of His virtues, as brooks lead us to their springs. When a Christian can quietly repose his trust on God, in a matter of very great difficulty, wherein there is no other thing to stay him, but God alone, this declares that

there is strength enough in God that bears him up, that there must be in Him that real abundance of goodness and truth that the word speaks of him. *Abraham believed, and gave glory to God:* (Rom. iv. 20:) this is what a believer can do, to declare the truth of God; he relies on it. *He that believes, sets to his seal that God is true.* (John iii. 33.) So also their *holiness* is for His praise. Men hear that there is a God who is infinitely holy, but they can see neither Him nor His holiness; yet, when they perceive some lineaments of it in the faces of His children, which are in no others, this may convince them that its perfection, which must be somewhere, can be no where else than in their Heavenly Father. When these, which are His peculiar plants, bring forth the fruits of holiness, which naturally they yielded not, it testifies a supernatural work of His hand who planted them; and the more they are fruitful, the greater is His praise. *Herein*, says our Saviour, *is your heavenly Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit.* (John xv. 8.) Were it not for the conscience of this duty to God, and possibly the necessity of their station and calling, it may be, some Christian had rather altogether lock up and keep within himself any grace he hath, than let it appear at all, considering some hazards which he and it run in the discovery; and, it may be, could take some pleasure in the world's mistakes and disesteem of him. But seeing both piety and charity require the acting of graces in converse with men, that which hypocrisy doth for itself, a real Christian may and should do for God.

2. The other thing mentioned, as making up this rule, will give the difference; that not only what we speak and do should be such as agrees with this end, but that in so speaking and doing our eye be upon this end; that all our Christian conversation be directly intended by us, not to cry up our own virtues, but to glorify God, and His virtues,—*to declare His praises who hath called us.*

Let your light, says our Saviour (Matt. v. 16), *shine*, and *shine before men* too; that is not forbidden; yea, it is com-

manded, but it is thus commanded, *Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works*—yourselves as little as may be, your works more than yourselves, (as the sun gives us its light, and will scarce suffer us to look upon itself,) —*may glorify*—Whom? You? No, but—*your Father which is in Heaven. Let your light shine*, it is given for that purpose, but let it shine always to the glory of the *Father of lights*. Men that seek themselves, may share in the same public kind of actions with you; but let your secret intention (which God eyes most) sever you. This is the impress that a sincere and humble Christian sets upon all his actions, *To the glory of God*. He useth all he hath, especially all his graces, to His praise who gives all, and is sorry he hath no more for this use, and is daily seeking after more, not to bring more esteem to himself, but more honour to God. It is a poor booty to hunt after that, namely, an airy vain breath of men: the best things in them, their solidest good, is altogether vanity; how much more that which is lightest and vainest in them! This is the mind that is in every Christian, in all his ways to deny himself, and to be willing to abase himself to exalt his Master; to be of St. Paul's temper, who regarded not himself at all, honour or dishonour, prison or liberty, life or death, content he was with anything, so *Christ might be magnified*. (Phil. i. 20.)

And as every godly mind must be thus affected, so especially the ministers of the Gospel, they who are not only called with others to partake of this *marvellous light*, but are in a special manner to hold it forth to others. How do pure affections become them, and ardent desires to promote His glory who hath so called them! A rush for your praise or dispraise of us; only receive Jesus Christ, and esteem highly of him, and it is enough. *We preach not ourselves*, says the Apostle, *but Christ Jesus the Lord*. (2 Cor. iv. 5.) That is our errand, not to catch either at base gain or vain applause for ourselves, but to exalt our Lord Jesus in the hearts of men. And to those who are so minded, there is a reward abiding them, of

such riches and honour as they would be very loth to exchange for any thing to be had amongst men.

But, in his station, this is the mind of every one who loves the Lord Jesus, most heartily to make a sacrifice of himself, and all he is and hath,—means, and esteem, and life, and all, to His glory who humbled himself so low, to exalt us to these dignities, to *make us kings and priests unto God.*

It is most just, seeing we have our crowns from Him, and that He hath set them on our heads, that we take them in our hands, and throw them down *before His throne.* All our graces (if we have any) are His free gift, and are given as the rich garments of this spiritual priesthood, only to attire us suitably for this spiritual sacrifice of His praises; as the costly vesture of the high priest under the Law, was not appointed to make him gay for himself, but to decorate him for his holy service, and to commend, as a figure of it, the perfect holiness wherewith our great high priest, Jesus Christ, was clothed. What good thing have we, that is not from the hand of our good God? And receiving all from Him, and after a special manner spiritual blessings, is it not reasonable that all we have, but those spiritual gifts especially, should declare His praise, and His only? David doth not grow big with vain thoughts, and lift up himself, because God had lifted him up, but exclaims, *I will extol Thee, because thou hast lifted me up.* (Psal. xxx. 1.) The visible heavens, and all the beauty and the lights in them, speak nothing but His glory who framed them; (as the Psalmist teacheth us, Psal. xix. 1;) and shall not these spiritual lights, *His called ones,* whom he hath made lights so peculiarly for that purpose, these *Stars in His right hand,* do it much more? Oh! let it be thus with us! The more he gives, be still the more humble, and let Him have the return of more glory, and let it go entire to Him; it is all His due; and in doing thus we shall still grow richer; for where he sees the most faithful servant, who purloins nothing, but improves all to his Master's advantage, surely, him He will trust with most.

And as it is thus both most due to God, and most profitable

for ourselves, in all things to seek His praises, so it is the most excellent and generous intent, to have the same thought with God, the same purpose as His, and to aim no lower than at His glory: whereas it is a base, poor thing for a man to seek himself far below that royal dignity that is here put upon Christians, and that priesthood joined with it. Under the Law, those who were squint-eyed were incapable of the priesthood: truly, this squinting out to our own interest, the looking aside to that, in God's affairs especially, so deforms the face of the soul, that it makes it altogether unworthy the honour of this spiritual priesthood. Oh! this is a large task, an infinite task. The several creatures bear their part in this; the sun says somewhat, and moon and stars, yea, the lowest have some share in it; the very plants and herbs of the field speak of God; and yet, the very highest and best, yea, all of them together, the whole concert of heaven and earth, cannot shew forth all His praise to the full. No, it is but a part, the smallest part of that glory, which they can reach.

We all pretend to these dignities, in that we profess ourselves Christians; but if we have a mind to be resolved of the truth in this, (for many, many are deceived in it!) we may, by asking ourselves seriously, and answering truly to these questions: 1*st*. Whether are my actions and the course of my life such as give evidence of the grace of God, and so speak His praise? If not, surely I am not of this number that God hath thus called and dignified. And this test, I fear, would degrade many. 2*dly*. If my life be somewhat regular and Christian-like, yet, whether do I in it all, singly and constantly, without any selfish or sinister end, desire and seek the glory of God alone? Otherwise, I may be like this *chosen generation*, but I am not one of them. And this, out of doubt, would make the number yet far less. Well, think on it; it is a miserable condition for men either to be grossly staining and dishonouring the holy religion they profess, or, in seeming to serve and honour God, to be serving and seeking themselves; it is the way to lose themselves for ever. Oh! it is a comfortable thing

to have an upright mind, and to love God for Himself; and *love seeks not its own things.* (1 Cor. xiii. 5.) They are truly happy, who make this their work sincerely, though weakly, to advance the praises of their God in all things; and who, finding the great imperfection of their best diligence in this work here, are still longing to be in that state, where they shall do it better.

Ver. 10. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

The love of God to His children is the great subject both of His word and of their thoughts; and therefore is it that His word (the rule of their thoughts, and their whole lives) speaks so much of that love, to the very end that they may think much, and esteem highly of it, and walk answerably to it. This is the scope of St. Paul's doctrine to the Ephesians, and the top of his desires for them. (See ch. iii. 17.) And this is our Apostle's aim here. As he began the Epistle with opposing their election in heaven to their dispersion on earth, the same consideration runs through the whole of it. Here he is representing to them the great fruit of that love, the happy and high estate to which they are called in Christ; that the choosing of Christ and of believers is as one act, and they as one entire object of it,—one glorious Temple, He the foundation and head corner-stone, and they the edifice;—one honourable fraternity, He the King of kings, and great high priest, and they likewise through him made kings and priests unto God the Father, *a royal priesthood;* He the *light of the world*, and they through Him the *children of light.* Now that this their dignity, which shines so bright in its own innate worth, may yet appear the more, the Apostle here sets it off by a double opposition, *first*, of the misery under which others are, and *secondly*, of that misery under which they themselves were before their calling. And this being set on both sides, is as a dark shadowing round about their happiness here described, setting off the lustre of it.

Their former misery, expressed in the former verse by *darkness*, is here more fully and plainly set before their view in these words. They are borrowed from the prophet Hosea, (ch. ii. ver. 23,) where, as is usual with the prophets, he is raised up by the Spirit of God, from the temporal troubles and deliverances of the Israelites, to consider and foretel that great restoration wrought by Jesus Christ, in purchasing a new people to Himself, made up both of Jews and Gentiles who believe; and therefore the prophecy is fit and applicable to both. So that the debate is altogether needless, whether it concerns the Jews or Gentiles; for in its spiritual sense, as relating to the kingdom of Christ, it foretels the making of the Gentiles, who were not before so, *the people of God*, and the recovery of the Jews likewise, who by their apostacies, and the captivities and dispersions which came upon them as just punishments of those apostacies, were degraded from the outward dignities they had as the people of God, and withal were spiritually miserable and captives by nature, and so in both respects laid equal with the Gentiles, and stood as much in need of this restitution as they. St. Paul useth the passage concerning the calling of the Gentiles, Rom. ix. 25. And here, St. Peter writing, as is most probable, particularly to the dispersed Jews, applies it to them, as being, in the very reference it bears to the Jews, truly fulfilled in those alone who were believers, faith making them a part of the true Israel of God, to which the promises do peculiarly belong: as the Apostle St. Paul argues at large, in the ninth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans.

Their former misery, and their present happiness, we have here under a double expression: they were, 1. *not a people*, 2. *destitute of mercy*. *Not the people of God*, says the Prophet; *not a people*, says our Apostle: being not God's people, they were so base and miserable as not to be worthy of the name of a people at all; as it is taken, Deut. xxxii. 21.

There is a kind of being, a life that a soul hath by a peculiar union with God, and therefore, in that sense, the soul without God is dead, as the body is without the soul. (Eph. ii. 1.) Yea,

as the body, separated from the soul, is not only a lifeless lamp, but putrefies, and becomes noisome and abominable, thus the soul, separated from God, is subject to a more loathsome and vile putrefaction. (See Psal. xiv. 3.) So that men who are yet unbelievers, *are not*, as the Hebrews expressed death. Multitudes of them *are not a people*, but a heap of filthy carcasses. Again, take our natural misery in the notion of a captivity, which was the judgment threatened against the Jews, to make them in this sense *not a people;* therefore their captivity is often spoken of by the Prophets as a death, and their restoration as their resurrection, as Ezek. xxxvii. And as a captive people is civilly dead, (as they speak,) so a soul captive to sin and the Prince of darkness, is spiritually dead, wanting happiness and well-being, which if it never attain, it had better, for itself, not be at all. There is nothing but disorder and confusion in the soul without God, the affections hurrying it away tumultuously.

Thus, captive sinners *are not; they are dead;* they want that happy being that flows from God to the souls which are united to Himself, and, consequently, they must want that society and union one with another, which results from the former, results from the same union that believers have with God, and the same being that they have in Him; which makes them truly worthy to be called a people, and particularly the people of God. His people are the only people in the world worthy to be called *a people;* the rest are but refuse and dross. Although in the world's esteem, which judges by its own rules in favour of itself, the people of God be as no body, no people, a company of silly creatures: yea, *we are made*, says the great Apostle, *as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things* (1 Cor. iv. 13); yet in His account who hath chosen them, who alone knows the true value of things, His people are *the only people*, and all the rest of the world as *nothing* in His eyes. He dignifies and beautifies them, and loves in them that beauty which He hath given them.

But under that term is comprised, not only that new being

of believers in each one of them apart, but that tie and union that is amongst them as *one people*, being incorporated together, and living under the same government and laws, without which a people are but as the beasts of the field, or the *fishes of the sea, and the creeping things that have no ruler over them*, as the Prophet speaks, Habak. i. 14. That regular living in society, and union in laws and policy, makes many men to be one people; but the civil union of men in states and kingdoms is nothing comparable to the mysterious union of the people of God with Him, and one with another. That commonwealth hath a firmer union than all others. Believers are knit together in Christ as their Head, not merely as a civil or political head ruling them, but as a natural head enlivening them, giving them all one life. Men in other societies, though well ordered, yet are but as a multitude of trees, regularly planted indeed, but each hath his own root; but the faithful are all branches of one root. Their union is so mysterious, that it is compared to the very union of Christ with his Father, as it is indeed the product of it, (John xvii. 21.)

People of God.] *I will say to them, Thou art my people, and they shall say Thou art my God.* (Hos. ii. 23.) That mutual interest and possession is the very foundation of all our comfort. He is the first chooser; He first says, *My people;* calls them so, and makes them to be so; and then they say, *My God.* It is therefore a relation that shall hold, and shall not break, because it is founded upon His choice who changes not. The tenor of an external covenant with a people, (as the Jews particularly found,) is such as may be broken by man's unfaithfulness, though God remain faithful and true; but the New Covenant of grace makes all sure on all hands, and cannot be broken; the Lord not only keeping His own part, but likewise performing ours in us, and for us, and establishing us, that as He departs not from us first, so we shall not depart from Him. *I will betroth thee to me for ever.* It is an indissoluble marriage, that is not in danger of being broken either by divorce or death.

My people.] There is a treasure of instruction and comfort wrapped up in that word, not only more than the profane world can imagine, (for they indeed know nothing at all of it,) but more than they who are of the number of his people are able to conceive,—a deep unfathomable. *My people;* they His portion, and He theirs! He accounts nothing of all the world beside them, and they of nothing at all beside Him. For them He continues the world. Many and great are the privileges of His people, contained in that great charter, the holy Scriptures, and rich is that land where their inheritance lies; but all is in this reciprocal, that *He is their God.* All His power and wisdom are engaged for their good. How great and many soever are their enemies, they may well oppose this to all, *He is their God.* They are sure to be protected and prospered, and in the end to have full victory. *Happy then is that people whose God is the Lord.*

Which had not obtained mercy.] *The mercies of the Lord* to His chosen are *from everlasting;* yet so long as His decree of mercy runs hid, and is not discovered to them in the effects of it, they are said *not to have* received, or *obtained, mercy.* When it begins to act and work in their effectual calling, then they find it to be theirs. It was in a secret way moving forward towards them before, as the sun after midnight is still coming nearer to us, though we perceive not its approach till the dawning of the day.

Mercy.] The former word, *the people of God*, teaches us how *great* the change is that is wrought by the calling of God: this teaches us, 1. How *free* it is. *The people of God*, that is the good attained in the change: *Obtained mercy*, that is the spring whence it flows. This is indeed implied in the words of the change; of *no people*—such as have no right to such a dignity at all, and in themselves no disposition for it—to be made *His people*, can be owing to nothing but free grace, such mercy as supposes nothing, and seeks nothing, but misery in us, and works upon that. As it is expressed to have been very free to this people of the ews, in choosing them before the rest of

the world, (Deut. vii. 7, 8,) so it is to the spiritual Israel of God, and to every one particularly belonging to that company. Why is it that He chooseth one of a family, and leaves another, but because it pleaseth Him? *He blots out their transgressions for his own name's sake.* (Isa. xliii. 25.) And, 2. As it is free mercy, so it is *tender mercy.* The word in the Prophet signifies *tenderness*, or bowels of compassion; and such are the mercies of our God towards us. See Jer. xxxi. 20; the bowels of a father, as it is Psal. ciii. 13; and if you think not that tenderness enough, those of a mother, yea, more than a mother, (Isa. xlix. 15. 3.) 3. It is *rich mercy;* it delights to glorify itself in the greatest misery; it pardons as easily the greatest as the smallest of debts. 4. It is a *constant unalterable mercy*, a stream still running.

Now in both these expressions the Apostle draws the eyes of believers to reflect on their former misery, and to view it together with their present state. This is very frequent in the Scriptures. (See Ezek. xvi.; Eph. xxi. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 11, *&c.*) And it is of very great use; it works the soul of a Christian to much humility, and love, and thankfulness, and obedience. It cannot choose but force him to abase himself, and to magnify the free grace and love of God. And this may be one reason why it pleaseth the Lord to suspend the conversion of some persons for many years of their life, yea, to suffer them to stain those years with grievous and gross sins, in order that the riches and glory of His grace, and the freeness of His choice, may be the more legible both to themselves and others. Likewise, those apprehensions of the wrath due to sin, and the sights of hell as it were, which he brings some unto, either at or after their conversion, make for this same end. That glorious description of the *New Jerusalem*, Revel. xxi. 16, is abundantly delightful in itself; and yet, the fiery lake spoken of there, makes all that is spoken of the other sound much the sweeter.

But universally, all the godly have this to consider, that they *were strangers and enemies to God*, and to think, Whence

was it that I, a lump of the same polluted clay with those that perish, should be taken, and purified, and moulded by the Lord's own hand for a vessel of glory? Nothing but free grace makes the difference; and where can there be love, and praises, and service found to answer this? All is to be ascribed to the mercy, gifts, and calling of Christ. And his ministers, with St. Paul, acknowledge that, because they *have received mercy, they faint not.* (2 Cor. iv. 1.)

But alas! we neither enjoy the comfort of this mercy as obtained, nor are grieved for wanting it, nor stirred up to seek after it, if not yet obtained. What do we think? Seems it a small thing in your eyes to be shut out from the presence of God, and to bear the weight of His wrath for ever, that you thus slight his mercy, and let it pass by you unregarded? Or shall an imagined obtaining divert you from the real pursuit of it? Will you be willingly deceived, and be your own deceivers, in a matter of so great importance? You cannot think too highly of the riches of Divine mercy; it is above all your thoughts; but remember and consider this, that there is a *peculiar people* of His own, to whom alone all the riches of it do belong. And therefore, how great soever it is, unless you find yourselves of that number, you cannot lay claim to the smallest share of it.

And you are not ignorant what is their character, what kind of people they are, who have such a knowledge of God as Himself gives. *They are all taught of God*, enlightened and sanctified by His Spirit, a holy people, as he is a Holy God: such as have the riches of that Grace by which they are saved, in most precious esteem, and have their hearts by it inflamed with His love, and therefore their thoughts taken up with nothing so much as studying how they may obey and honour Him; rather choosing to displease all the world than offend Him, and accounting nothing too dear, yea, nothing good enough to do Him service. If it be thus with you, then you have indeed *obtained mercy.*

But if you be such as can wallow in the same puddle with

the profane world, and take a share of their ungodly ways, or if, though your outward carriage be somewhat more smooth, you *regard iniquity in your hearts*, have your hearts ardent in the love and pursuit of the world, but frozen to God; if you have some bosom idol that you hide and entertain, and cannot find in your heart to part with some one beloved sin, whatsoever it is, for all the love that God hath manifested to man in the *Son of His love, Jesus Christ;* in a word, if you can please and delight yourself in any way displeasing unto God, (though his people, while they are here, have spots, yet these are not the spots of his people that I am now speaking of,) I can give you no assurance that as yet you have obtained mercy: on the contrary, it is certain that *the wrath of God is yet abiding on you*, and if you continue in this state, you are in apparent danger of perishing under it. You are yet children of spiritual darkness, and in the way to utter and everlasting darkness. Know ye what it is to be destitute of this mercy? It is a woful state, though you had all worldly enjoyments, and were at the top of outward prosperity, to be shut out from the mercy and love of God.

There is nothing doth so kindly work repentance, as the right apprehension of the mercy and love of God. The beams of that love are more powerful to melt the heart, than all the flames of mount Sinai, all the threatenings and terrors of the Law. Sin is the root of our misery; and therefore it is the proper work of this mercy to rescue the soul from it, both from the guilt and the power of it at once. Can you think there is any suitableness in it, that the peculiar people of God should despise His laws, and practise nothing but rebellions? that those in whom He hath magnified His mercy should take pleasure in abusing it? or that He hath washed any with the blood of His Son, to the end that they may still *wallow again in the mire?* As if we were redeemed not *from* sin but *to* sin; as if we should say, *We are delivered to do all these abominations*, as the Prophet speaks, Jer. vii. 10. Oh! let us not dare thus abuse and affront the free grace of God, if we mean

to be saved by it; but let as many as would be found amongst those that obtain mercy, walk as His people, whose peculiar inheritance is His mercy. And seeing this *grace of God hath appeared unto us*, let us embrace it, and let it effectually *teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.* (Tit. ii. 11, 12.)

And if you be persuaded to be earnest suitors for this mercy, and to fly unto Jesus, who is the *true mercy-seat*, then be assured it is yours. Let not the greatest guiltiness scare you and drive you from it, but rather drive you the more to it; for the greater the weight of that misery is, under which you lie, the more need you have of this mercy, and the more will be the glory of it in you. It is a strange kind of argument used by the Psalmist, and yet a sure one,—it concludes well and strongly, (Psal. xxv. 7,) *Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.* The soul oppressed with the greatness of its sin lying heavy upon it, may, by that very greatness of it pressing upon it, urge the forgiveness of it at the hands of Free Mercy. It is *for thy name's sake*,—that makes it strong; the force of the inference lies in that. Thou art nothing, and worse than nothing? True; but all that ever obtained this mercy were once so: they were *nothing* of all that which it hath made them to be; they were *not a people*, had no interest in God, were strangers to mercy, yea, *heirs of wrath;* yea, they had not so much as a desire after God, until this mercy prevented them, and shewed itself to them, and them to themselves, and so moved them to desire it, and caused them to find it, caught hold on them and plucked them out of the dungeon. And it is unquestionably still the same mercy, and fails not; ever expending, and yet never all spent, yea, not so much as at all diminished; flowing, as the rivers, from one age to another, serving each age in the present, and yet no whit the less to those that come after. He who exercises it is *The LORD, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin* to all that come unto Him, and yet still *keeping mercy for thousands* that come after.

You who have obtained this mercy, and have the seal of it within you, it will certainly conform your hearts to its own

nature; it will work you to a merciful compassionate temper of mind to the souls of others who have not yet obtained it. You will indeed, as the Lord doth, hate sin; but as He doth likewise, you will pity the sinner. You will be so far from misconstruing and grumbling at the long-suffering of God, (as if you would have the bridge cut because you are over, as St. Augustine speaks,) that, on the contrary, your great desire will be to draw others to partake of the same mercy with you, knowing it to be rich enough; and you will, in your station, use your best diligence to bring in many to it, from love both to the souls of men and to the glory of God.

And withal, you will be still admiring and extolling this mercy, as it is manifested unto yourselves, considering what it is, and what you were before it visited you. The Israelites confessed, (at the offering of the first fruits,) to set off the bounty of God, *A Syrian ready to perish was my father;* they confessed their captivity in Egypt: but far poorer and baser is our natural condition, and far more precious is that land, to the possession of which this free mercy bringeth us.

Do but call back your thoughts, you that have indeed escaped it, and look back into that pit of misery whence the hand of the Lord hath drawn you out, and you cannot fail to love Him highly, and still kiss that gracious hand, even while it is scourging you with any affliction whatsoever; because it hath once done this for you, namely, plucked you out of everlasting destruction. So David, (Psal. xl. 23,) as the thoughts of this change will teach us to praise, *He hath brought me up out of an horrible pit:* then follows, *He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God;* not only *redeemed me from destruction,* but withal *crowned me with glory and honour.* (Psal. ciii. 4.) He not only doth forgive all our debts, and let us out of prison, but enriches us with an estate that cannot be spent, and dignifies us with a crown that cannot wither, made up of nothing of ours. These two considerations will stretch and tune the heart very high, namely, from what a low estate Grace brings a man, and how high it doth exalt him; in what

a beggarly, vile condition the Lord finds us, and yet, that He doth not only free us thence, but puts such dignities on us. *He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.* (Psal. cxiii. 7.) Or, as Joshua the priest was stripped of his filthy garments, and had a fair mitre set upon his head, (Zech. iii. 3—5,) so those of this Priesthood are dealt withal.

Now, that we may be the deeper in the sense and admiration of this mercy, it is indeed our duty to seek earnestly after the evidence and strong assurance of it; for things work on us according to our notice and apprehensions of them, and therefore, the more right assurance we have of mercy, the more love, and thankfulness, and obedience, will spring from it. Therefore it is that the Apostle here represents this great and happy change of estate to Christians, as a thing that they may know concerning themselves, and that they ought to seek the knowledge of, that so they may be duly affected with it. And it is indeed a happy thing, to have in the soul an extract of that great archive and act of grace towards it, that hath stood in Heaven from eternity. It is surely both a very comfortable and very profitable thing, to find and to read clearly the seal of mercy upon the soul, which is holiness, that by which a man is marked by God as a part of his peculiar possession that He hath chosen out of the world. And when we perceive any thing of this, let us look back, as here the Apostle would have us to do, and reflect how God has *called us from darkness to His marvellous light.*

Ver. 11. Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

The right spiritual knowledge that a Christian hath of God and of himself, differenceth itself from whatsoever is likest to it, by the power and influence it hath upon the heart and life. And in this it hath the lively impression of that doctrine of the Holy Scriptures that teaches it; wherein we still find

throughout, that the high mysteries of religion are accompanied with practical truths, which not only agree with them, but are drawn out of them, and not violently drawn, but naturally flowing from them, as pure streams from a pure spring. Thus, in this Epistle, we find the Apostle intermixing his divine doctrine with most useful and practical exhortations, ch. i., v. 13, 22: and in the beginning of this chapter again; and now in these words.

And upon this model ought both the ministers of the Gospel to form their preaching, and the hearers their ear. Ministers are not to instruct only, or to exhort only, but to do both. To exhort men to holiness and the duties of a Christian life, without instructing them in the doctrine of faith, and bringing them to Jesus Christ, is to build a house without a foundation. And on the other side, to instruct the mind in the knowledge of Divine things, and neglect the pressing of that practice and power of godliness, which is the undivided companion of true faith, is to forget the building that ought to be raised upon that foundation once laid, which is likewise a point of very great folly. Or if men, after laying that right foundation, do proceed to the superstructure of vain and empty speculations, it is but to *build hay and stubble*, instead of those solid truths that direct the soul in the way to happiness, which are of more solidity and worth than *gold, and silver, and precious stones.* (1 Cor. iii. 12.) Christ, and the doctrine that reveals him, is called by St. Paul, *the mystery of the faith*, (1 Tim. iii. 9,) and (ver. 16) *the mystery of godliness:* as Christ is the object of faith, so is he the spring and fountain of godliness. The Apostle having, we see, in his foregoing discourse unfolded the excellency of Christ in him, proceeds here to exhort them to that pure and spiritual temper of mind and course of life, that becomes them as Christians.

Those hearers are to blame, and do prejudice themselves, who are attentive only to such words and discourse as stir the affections for the present, and find no relish in the doctrine of faith, and the unfolding of those mysteries that bear the whole

weight of religion, being the ground both of all Christian obedience, and all exhortations and persuasives to it. Those temporary, sudden stirrings of the affections, without a rightly-informed mind, and some measure of due knowledge of God in Christ, do no good. It is the wind of a word of exhortation that stirs them for the time against their lusts, but the first wind of temptation that comes, carries them away; and thus the mind is but tossed to and fro, like a wave of the sea, with all kind of winds, not being *rooted and grounded in the faith of Christ*, (as it is Col. ii. 7,) and so, not *rooted in the love of Christ*, (Eph. iii. 17,) which are the conquering graces that subdue unto a Christian his lusts and the world. (See 1 John v. 4; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) Love makes a man to be dead to himself and to the world, and to *live to Christ who died for him.*

On the other part, they are no less, yea, more to blame, who are glad to have their minds instructed in the mysteries of the Christian faith, and out of a mere natural desire to know, are curious to hear such things as inform them: but when it comes to the urging of holiness and mortifying their lusts, *these are hard sayings*,—they had rather there were some way to receive Christ and retain their lusts too, and to bring them to agreement. To hear of the mercies of God, and the dignities of his people in Christ, is very pleasing; but to have this follow upon it, *Abstain from fleshly lusts*, this is an importune, troublesome discourse. But it must be so for all that: those who will share in that mercy and happiness, must *abstain from fleshly lusts.*

Dearly beloved, I beseech you.] There is a faculty of reproving required in the ministry, and sometimes a necessity of very sharp rebukes, cutting ones. They who have much of the *spirit of meekness*, may have *a rod* by them too, to use upon necessity. (1 Cor. iv. 21.) But surely the way of meekness is that they use most willingly, as the Apostle there implies; and out of all question, with ingenuous minds, the mild way of sweet entreaties is very forcible; as oil that penetrates and sinks in insensibly, or, (to use that known resemblance,)

they prevail as the sun-beams, which, without any noise, made the traveller cast his cloak, which all the blustering of the wind could not do, but made him rather gather it closer, and bind it faster about him. We see the Apostles are frequent in this strain of entreaties, *I beseech you*, as Rom. xii. 1. Now this word of entreaty is strengthened much by the other, *Dearly beloved.* Scarcely can the harshest reproofs, much less gentle reproofs, be thrown back, that have upon them the stamp of love. That which is known to come from love, cannot readily but be so received too. And it is thus expressed for that very purpose, that the request may be the more welcome: *Beloved.* It is the advice of a friend, one that truly loves you, and aims at nothing in it but your good. It is because I love you, that I entreat you, and entreat you as you love yourselves, *to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against your souls.* And what is our purpose when we exhort you to believe and repent, but that you may be happy in the forgiveness of your sins? Why do we desire you to embrace Christ, but that through Him ye may have everlasting life? Howsoever you take these things, it is our duty incessantly to put you in mind of them; and to do it with much love and tenderness of affection to your souls; not only pressing you by frequent warnings and exhortings, but also by frequent prayers and tears for your salvation.

Abstain.] It was a very wise abridgment that Epictetus made of philosophy into those two words, *Bear and forbear.* These are truly the two main duties that our Apostle recommends to his Christian brethren in this Epistle. It is one and the same strength of spirit, that raises a man above both the troubles and pleasures of the world, and makes him despise and trample upon both.

We have first briefly to explain what these *fleshly lusts* mean; then, to consider the exhortation of *abstaining* from them.

Unchaste desires are particularly called by this name indeed, but to take it for these only in this place, is doubtless too nar-

row. That which seems to be the true sense of it here, takes in all undue desires and use of earthly things, and all the corrupt affections of our carnal minds.

Now in that sense, these *fleshly lusts* comprehend a great part of the body of sin. All those three, which St. John speaks of, (1 Epis. ii. 16,) the world's accursed trinity, are included under this name here of *fleshly lusts*. A crew of base, imperious masters they are, to which the natural man is a slave; *serving divers lusts*. (Tit. iii. 3.) Some are more addicted to the service of one kind of lust, some to that of another; but all are in this unhappy, that they are strangers, yea, enemies to God, and, as the brute creatures, servants to their flesh;—either covetous, like the beasts of the field, with their eye still upon the earth, or voluptuous, swimming in pleasures, as fishes in the sea, or like the fowls of the air, soaring in vain ambition. All the *strifes* that are raised about these things, all *malice* and *envyings*, all *bitterness* and *evil-speaking*, (Eph. iv. 31,) which are *works of the flesh*, and tend to the satisfying of its wicked desires, we are here entreated to abstain from.

To abstain from these lusts, is, to hate and fly from the very thoughts and first motions of them; and if surprised by these, yet to kill them there, that they bring not forth; and to suspect ourselves even in those things that are not sinful, and to keep afar off from all inducements to those polluted ways of sin.

In a word, we are to abstain not only from the serving of our flesh in things forbidden, as unjust gain or unlawful pleasures, but also from immoderate desire of, and delighting in, any earthly thing, although it may be in itself lawfully, yea, necessarily in some degree, desired and used. Yea, to have any feverish, pressing thirst after gain, even just gain, or after earthly delights, though lawful, is to be guilty of those fleshly lusts, and a thing very unbeseeming the dignity of a Christian. To see them that are *clothed in scarlet, embracing a dunghill*, (Lam. iv. 4,) is a strange sight. Therefore the Apostle hav-

ing so cleared that immediately before, hath the better reason to require this of them, that they *abstain from fleshly lusts.*

Let their own slaves serve them; you are redeemed and delivered from them, a free people, yea, kings; and suits it with royal dignity to obey vile lusts? You are priests consecrated to God, and will you tumble yourselves and your precious garments in the mire? It was a high speech of a heathen, *That he was greater, and born to greater things, than to be a servant to his body.* How much more ought he who is born again to say so, being born heir to *a crown that fadeth not away!*

Again, as the honour of a Christian's estate is far above this baseness of serving his lusts, so the happiness and pleasantness of his estate set him above the need of the pleasures of sin. The Apostle said before, *If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, desire the sincere milk of the word;* desire that word wherein ye may taste more of His graciousness. And as that exhortation fitly urgeth the appetite's desire of the word, so it strongly persuades to this abstinence from fleshly lusts; yea, to the disdain and loathing of them. If you have the least experience of the sweetness of His love, if you have but tasted of the crystal river of His pleasures, the muddy puddle-pleasures of sin will be hateful and loathsome to you; yea, the very best earthly delights will be disrelished, and will seem unsavoury to your taste. The imbittering of the breasts of the world to the godly, by afflictions, doth something indeed towards weaning them from them; but the *breasts of consolation*, that are given them in their stead, wean much more effectually.

The true reason why we remain servants to these lusts, some to one, some to another, is, because we are still strangers to the love of God and those pure pleasures that are in Him. Though the pleasures of this earth be poor and low, and most unworthy our pursuit, yet so long as men know no better, they will stick by those they have, such as they are. The philosopher gives this as the reason why men are so much set upon sensual delights, because they know not the higher pleasures

that are proper to the soul; and they must have it some way. It is too often in vain to speak to men in this strain, to follow them with the Apostle's entreaty, *I beseech you, abstain from fleshly lusts*, unless they who are spoken to be such as he speaks of in the former words, such as *have obtained mercy*, and *have tasted of the graciousness* and love of Christ, *whose loves are better than wine.* (Cant. i. 2.) Oh that we would seek the knowledge of this love! for, *seeking* it, we *should find it;* and finding it, there would need no force to pull the delights of sin out of our hands; we should throw them away of our own accord.

Thus a carnal mind prejudices itself against religion, when it hears that it requires an abstinence from fleshly lusts, and bereaves men of their mirth and delight in sin; but they know not that it is to make way for more refined and precious delights. There is nothing of this kind taken from us, but by a very advantageous exchange it is made up. *In the world ye shall have affliction, but in me ye shall have peace.* Is not want of the world's peace abundantly paid with peace in Christ? Thus, fleshly lusts are cast out of the hearts of believers as rubbish and trash, to make room for spiritual comforts. We are barred *fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*, to the end that *we may have fellowship with God and his Son Jesus Christ.* (1 John i. 3, 7.) This is to make men *eat Angel's food* indeed, as was said of the manna. The serving of the flesh sets man below himself, down amongst the beasts; but the consolations of the Spirit, and communion with God, raise him above himself, and associate him with the angels. But let us speak to the Apostle's own dissuasives from these lusts, taken, 1. From the condition of Christians; 2. From the condition of those lusts.

1. From the condition of Christians: *As strangers.* These dispersed Jews were strangers scattered in divers countries, (ch. i. ver. 1,) but that is not intended here; they are called strangers in that spiritual sense which applies in common to all the saints. Possibly, in calling them thus, he alludes to the outward dis-

persion, but means, by the allusion, to express their spiritual alienation from the world, and interest in the New Jerusalem.

And this he uses as a very pertinent enforcement of his exhortation. Whatsoever others do, the serving of the flesh, and love of the world, are most incongruous and unseemly in you. Consider what you are. If you were citizens of this world, then you might drive the same trade with them, and follow the same lusts; but seeing you are chosen and called out of this world, and invested into a new society, made free of another city, and are therefore here but travellers passing through to your own country, it is very reasonable that there be this difference betwixt you and the world, that while they live as at home, your carriage be such as becomes strangers; not glutting yourselves with their pleasures, not surfeiting upon their delicious fruits, as some unwary travellers do abroad, but as wise strangers, living warily and soberly, and still minding most of all your journey homewards, suspecting dangers and snares in your way, and so walking with holy fear (as the Hebrew word for a *stranger* imports).

There is, indeed, a miserable party even within a Christian: the remainder of corruption, that is no *stranger* here, and therefore keeps friendship and correspondence with the world, and will readily betray him if he watch not the more. So that he is not only to fly *the pollutions of the world* that are round about him, and to choose his steps that he be not insnared from without; but he is to be upon a continual guard against the lusts and corruption that are yet within himself, to curb and control them, and give them resolute and flat refusals when they solicit him, and to stop up their essays and opportunities of intercourse with the world, and such things as nourish them, and so to do what he can to starve them out of the holds they keep within him, and to strengthen that new nature which is in him; to live and act according to it, though, in doing so, he shall be sure to live as a stranger here, and a despised, mocked, and hated stranger.

And it is not, on the whole, the worse that it should be so.

If men in foreign countries be subject to forget their own at any time, it is surely when they are most kindly used abroad, and are most at their ease: and thus a Christian may be in some danger when he is best accommodated, and hath most of the smiles and caresses of the world; so that though he can never wholly forget his home that is above, yet his thoughts of it will be less frequent, and his desires of it less earnest, and it may be, he may insensibly slide into its customs and habits, as men will do that are well seated in some other country. But by the troubles and unfriendliness of the world he gains this, that when they abound most upon him, he then feels himself a stranger, and remembers to behave as such, and thinks often with much delight and strong desires on his own country, and the rich and sure inheritance that lies there, and the ease and rest he shall have when he comes thither.

And this will persuade him strongly to fly all polluted ways and lusts, as fast as the world follows them. It will make him abhor *the pleasures of sin*, and use the allowable enjoyments of this earth warily and moderately, never engaging his heart to them as worldlings do, but always keeping that free,—free from that earnest desire in the pursuit of worldly things, and that deep delight in the enjoyment of them, which the men of the earth bestow upon them. There is a diligence in his calling, and a prudent regard of his affairs, not only permitted to a Christian, but required of him. But yet, in comparison of his great and *high calling*, (as the Apostle terms it,) he follows all his other business with a kind of coldness and indifferency, as not caring very much which way they go; his heart is elsewhere. The traveller provides himself as he can with entertainment and lodging where he comes: if it be commodious, it is well, but if not it is no great matter. If he find but necessaries, he can abate delicacies very well; for where he finds them in his way, he neither can, nor, if he could, would choose to stay there. Though his inn were dressed with the richest hangings and furniture, yet it is not his home; he must and would leave it. This is the character of ungodly men, *they*

mind earthly things (Phil. iii. 19); they are drowned in them over head and ears, as we say.

If Christians would consider how little, and for how little a while, they are concerned in any thing here, they would go through any state, and any changes of state, either to the better or the worse, with very composed equal minds, always moderate in their necessary cares, and never taking any care at all for the flesh, *to fulfil the lusts of it.* (Rom. xiii. 14.)

Let them that have no better home than this world to lay claim to, live here as at home, and serve their lusts; they that have all *their portion in this life*, no more good to look for than what they can catch here, let them take their time of the poor profits and pleasures that are here; but you that have your whole estate, all your riches and pleasures laid up in Heaven, and *reserved* there *for you*, let your hearts be there, and your *conversation* there. This is not the place of your rest, nor of your delights, unless you would be willing to change, and to have *your good things here*, as some foolish travellers, who spend the estate they should live on at home, in a little while, braving it abroad amongst strangers. Will you, with *profane Esau, sell your birthright for a mess of pottage*,—sell eternity for a moment, and for a moment sell such pleasures as a moment of them is more worth than an eternity of the other.

2. The Apostle argues from the condition of those lusts. It were quarrel enough against *fleshly lusts which war against the soul*, that they are so far below the soul, that they cannot content, no, nor at all reach the soul; they are not a suitable, much less a satisfying good to it. Although sin hath unspeakably abused the soul of man, yet its excellent nature and original do still cause a vast disproportion betwixt it and all those gross base things of the earth, which concern the flesh, and go no further. But this is not all: these fleshly lusts are not only of no benefit to the soul, but they are its pernicious enemies; *they war against it.* And their war against it is all made up of stratagem and sleight, for they cannot hurt the

soul, but by itself. They promise it some contentment, and so gain its consent to serve them, and undo itself. They embrace the soul that they may strangle it. The soul is too much diverted from its own proper business, by the inevitable and incessant necessities of the body; and therefore it is the height of injustice and cruelty to make it likewise serve the extravagant and sinful desires of the flesh; so much time for sleep, and so much for eating and drinking, and dressing and undressing, and by many, the greatest part of the time that remains is spent in labouring and providing for these. Look on the employments of most men: all the labour of the husbandmen in the country, and of tradesmen in the city, the multitudes of shops and callings, what is the end of them all, but the interest and service of the body? And in all these, the immortal soul is drawn down to drudge for the mortal body, the house of clay wherein it dwells. And in the sense of this, those souls that truly know and consider themselves in this condition, do often groan under the burden, and desire the day of their deliverance. But the service of the flesh in the *inordinate lusts* of it, is a point of far baser slavery and indignity to the soul, and doth not only divert it from spiritual things for the time, but habitually indisposes it to every spiritual work, and makes it earthly and sensual, and so unfits it for heavenly things. Where these lusts, or any one of them have dominion, the soul cannot at all perform any good; can neither pray, nor hear, nor read the word aright; and in so far as any of them prevail upon the soul of a child of God, they do disjoint and disable it for holy things. Although they be not of the grossest kind of lusts, but such things as are scarcely taken notice of in a man, either by others or by his own conscience, some irregular desires or entanglements of the heart, yet *these little foxes will destroy the vines;* (Cant. ii. 15;) they will prey upon the graces of a Christian, and keep them very low. Therefore it concerns us much to study our hearts, and to be exact in calling to account the several affections that are in them; otherwise, even such as *are called of God*, and

have obtained mercy, (for such the Apostle speaks to,) may have such lusts within them, as will much abate the flourishing of their graces, and the spiritual beauty of the soul.

The godly know it well in their sad experience, that their own hearts do often deceive them, harbouring and hiding such things as deprive them much of that liveliness of grace, and those comforts of the Holy Ghost, that otherwise they would be very likely to attain unto.

This *warring against the soul*, which means their mischievous and hurtful nature, hath this also included under it, that these lusts, as breaches of God's law, do subject the soul to His. wrath. So that by this the Apostle might well urge his point Besides that these lusts are unworthy of you, the truth is, if you Christians serve your lusts, you kill your souls. So Romans viii. 13.

Consider, when men are on their death-beds, and near their entering into eternity, what they then think of all their toiling in the earth, and serving of their own hearts and lusts in any kind ; when they see that, of all these ways, nothing remains to them but the guiltiness of their sin, and the accusations of conscience, and the wrath of God.

Oh ! that you would be persuaded to esteem your precious souls, and not wound them as you do, but war for them, against all those lusts that war against them. The soul of a Christian is doubly precious, being, besides its natural excellency, ennobled by grace, and so twice descended of Heaven; and therefore it deserves better usage than to be turned into a scullion, to serve the flesh. The service of Jesus Christ is that which alone is fitting to it: it is alone honourable for the soul to serve so high a lord, and its service is due only to Him who bought it at so high a rate.

Ver. 12. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

THESE two things, that a natural man makes least account of, are of all things in highest regard with a Christian, his own soul and God's glory: so that there be no stronger persuasives to him in any thing, than the interest of these two. And by these the Apostle urgeth his present exhortation to holiness and blamelessness of life. For the substance of his advice or request in this and the former verse, is the same: a truly *honest conversation* is that only which is spiritual, not defiled with *the carnal lusts and pollutions of the world.*

The abstaining from those lusts doth indeed comprehend, not only the rule of outward carriage, but the inward temper of the mind; whereas this *honest conversation* doth more expressly concern our external deportment amongst men; as it is added, *honest among the Gentiles*, and so tending to the glory of God. So that these two are inseparably to be regarded, the inward disposition of our hearts, and the outward conversation and course of our lives.

I shall speak to the former first, as the spring of the latter. *Keep thine heart with all diligence,*—all depends upon that, —*for from thence are the issues of life.* (Prov. iv. 23.) And if so, then the regulating of the tongue, and eyes, and feet, and all will follow, as there it follows, v. 24: *Put away from thee a froward mouth.* That the impure streams may cease from running, the corrupt spring must be dried up. Men may convey them in a close and concealed manner, making them run, as it were, under ground, as they do filth under vaults and in ditches *(sentinas et cloacas)*; but till the heart be renewed and purged from base lusts, it will still be sending forth, some way or other, the streams of iniquity. *As a fountain swelleth out,* or casteth forth her waters incessantly, *so she casteth out her wickedness*, says the Prophet of that very people and city that were called *holy*, by reason of the

ordinances of God, and the profession of the true religion that were amongst them: and therefore it is the same prophet's advice from the Lord, *Wash thine heart, O Jerusalem. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?* (Jer. vi. 7, and iv. 14.)

This is the true method, according to our Saviour's doctrine: *Make the tree good, and then the fruits will be good;* not till then; for *who can gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* (Matt. vii. 16, 17.) Some good outward actions avail nothing, the soul being unrenewed; as you may stick some figs, or hang some clusters of grapes upon a thorn-bush, but they cannot grow upon it.

In this men deceive themselves, even such as have some thoughts of amendment; when they fall into sin, and are reproved for it, they say, (and possibly think so too,) "I will take heed to myself, I will be guilty of this no more." And because they go no deeper, they are many of them ensnared in the same kind again; but, however, if they do never commit that same sin, they do but change it for some other: as a current of waters, if you stop their passage one way, they rest not till they find another. The conversation can never be uniformly and entirely good, till the frame of the heart, the affections and desires that lodge in it, be changed. It is naturally *an evil treasure* of impure lusts, and must in some way vent and spend what it hath within. It is to begin with the wrong end of your work, to rectify the outside first, to smooth the conversation, and not first of all purge the heart. Evil affections are the source of evil speeches and actions. *Whence are strifes and fightings?* says St. James: *Are they not from your lusts which war in your members?* (Jam. iv. 1.) Unquiet, unruly lusts within, are the cause of the unquietnesses and contentions abroad in the world. One man will have his corrupt will, and another his, and thus they shock and justle one another; and by the cross encounters of their purposes, as flints meeting, they strike out those sparks that set all on fire.

So then, according to the order of the Apostle's exhortation, the only true principle of all good and Christian conversation in the world, is the mortifying of all earthly and sinful lusts in the heart. While they have possession of the heart, they do so clog it, and straiten it towards God and his ways, that it cannot walk constantly in them; but when the heart is freed from them, it is enlarged, and so, as David speaks, the man is fitted not only to walk, but to *run the way of God's commandments.* (Psal. cxix. 32.) And without this *freeing of the heart*, a man will be at the best very uneven and incongruous in his ways,—in one step like a Christian, and in another like a worldling; which is an unpleasant and unprofitable way, not according to that word, (Psal. xviii. 32,) *Thou hast set my feet as hind's feet*,—set them *even*, as the word is, not only swift, but straight and even; and that is the thing here required, that the whole course and revolution of a Christian's life be like himself. And that it may be so, the whole body of sin, and all the members of it, *all the deceitful lusts, must be crucified.*

In the words there are three things: 1. One point of a Christian's ordinary entertainment in the world, is, *to be evil spoken of.* 2. Their good use of that evil, is, *to do the better for it.* 3. The good end and the certain effect of their so doing, is, *the glory of God.*

1. *Whereas they speak against you as evil doers.*] This is in general the disease of a man's corrupt nature, and argues much the baseness and depravedness of it,—this propension to evil speaking one of another, either blotting the best actions with misconstructions, or taking doubtful things by the left ear; not choosing the most favourable, but, on the contrary, the very harshest sense that can be put upon them. Some men take more pleasure in the narrow eyeing of the true and real faults of men, and then speak of them with a kind of delight. All these kinds of evil speaking are such fruits as spring from that bitter root of pride and self-love, which is naturally deep fastened in every man's heart. But besides

this general bent to evil speaking, there is a particular malice in the world against those who are *born of God,* which must have vent in calumnies and reproaches. If this evil speaking be the hissing that is natural to the serpent's seed, surely, by reason of their natural antipathy, it must be breathed forth most against the *seed of the woman*, those that are one with Jesus Christ. If the *tongues* of the ungodly be *sharp swords* even to one another, they will *whet them* sharper than ordinary when they are to use them against the righteous, to wound their name. The evil tongue must be always burning, that *is set on fire of hell,* as St. James speaks; but against the godly, it will be sure to be heated seven times hotter than it is for others. The reasons of this are, 1. Being naturally haters of God, and yet unable to reach Him, what wonder is it if their malice vent itself against His image in His children, and labour to blot and stain that, all they can, with the foulest calumnies? 2. Because they are neither able nor willing themselves to attain unto the spotless, holy life of Christians, they bemire them, and would make them like themselves, by false aspersions: they cannot rise to the estate of the godly, and therefore they endeavour to draw them down to theirs by detraction. 3. The reproaches they cast upon the professors of pure religion, they mean mainly against religion itself, and intend by them to reflect upon it.

These evil speakings of the world against pious men professing religion, are partly gross falsehoods, invented without the least ground or appearance of truth; for the world being ever credulous of evil, especially upon so deep a prejudice as it hath against the godly, the falsest and most absurd calumnies will always find so much belief as to make them odious, or very suspected at least to such as know them not. This is the world's maxim, *Lie confidently, and it will always do something;* as a stone taken out of the mire and thrown against a white wall, though it stick not there, but rebound presently back again, yet it leaves a spot behind it. And with this kind of evil speakings were the primitive Christians surcharged,

even with gross and horrible falsehoods, as all know who know any thing of the history of those times; even such things were reported of them as the worst of wicked men would scarcely be guilty of. The Devil, as crafty as he is, makes use, again and again, of his old inventions, and makes them serve in several ages; for so were the *Waldenses* accused of inhuman banquetings and beastly promiscuous uncleanness, and divers things *not once to be named among Christians*, much less to be practised by them. So that it is no new thing to meet with the impurest, vilest slanders, as the world's reward of holiness and the practice of pure religion.

Then again consider how much more will the wicked insult upon the least *real blemishes* that they can espy amongst the professors of godliness. And in this there is a threefold injury very ordinary: 1. Strictly to pry into, and maliciously to object against Christians the smallest imperfections and frailties of their lives, as if they pretended to and promised absolute perfection. They do indeed *exercise themselves* (such as are Christians indeed) with St. Paul, *to keep a good conscience in all things towards God and men;* (Acts xxiv. 16;) they have a *regard unto all God's commandments*, as David speaks; they have a sincere love to God, which makes them study the exactest obedience they can reach: and this is an imperfect kind of perfection; it is evangelical, but not angelical. 2. Men are apt to impute the scandalous falls of some particular Christians to the whole number. It is a very short incompetent rule, to make judgment of any one man himself by one action, much more to measure all the rest of the same profession by it. And they yet proceed further in this way of misjudging. 3. They impute the personal failings of men to their religion, and disparage it because of the faults of those that profess it; which, as the ancients plead well, is the greatest injustice, and such as they would not be guilty of against their own philosophers. They could well distinguish betwixt their doctrine and the manners of some of their followers, and thus ought they to have dealt with Christians too. They ought to have considered their

religion in itself, and the doctrine that it teacheth, and had they found it vicious, the blame had been just; but if it taught nothing but holiness and righteousness, then the blame of any unholiness or unrighteousness found amongst Christians, ought to rest upon the persons themselves who were guilty of it, and not to be stretched to the whole number of professors, much less to the religion that they professed. And yet this is still the custom of the world upon the least failing they can espy in the godly, or such as seem to be so; much more with open mouth do they revile religion, upon any gross sin in any of its professors.

But seeing this is the very character of a profane mind, and the badge of the enemies of religion, beware of sharing in the least with them in it. Give not easy entertainment to the reports of profane or of mere civil men, against the professors of religion; they are undoubtedly partial, and their testimony may be justly suspected. Lend them not a ready ear to receive their evil speakings, much less your tongue to divulge them, and set them further going; yea, take heed that you take not pleasure in any the least kind of scoffs against the sincerity and power of religion. And all of you who desire to walk as Christians, be very wary that you wrong not one another, and help not the wicked against you, by your mutual misconstructions and miscensures one of another. Far be it from you to take pleasure in hearing others evil-spoken of; whether unjustly or though it be some way deservedly, yet let it be always grievous to you, and no way pleasing to hear such things, much less to speak of them. It is the Devil's delight to be pleased with evil-speakings. The Syrian calls him an *Akal Kartza*, *Eater of slanders or calumnies.* They are a dish that pleases his palate, and men are naturally fond of his diet. In Psal. xxxv. 16, there is a word that is rendered *mockers at feasts*, or *feasting-mockers*—persons who feasted men's ears, at their meetings, with speaking of the faults of others scoffingly, and therefore shared with them of their cakes, or feasts, as the word is. But to a renewed Christian mind, which hath a new

taste, and all its senses new, there is nothing more unsavoury, than to hear the defaming of others, especially of such as profess religion. Did *the law of love* possess our hearts, it would regulate both the ear and tongue, and make them most tender of the name of our brethren; it would teach us the faculty of covering their infirmities, and judging favourably, taking always the best side and most charitable sense of their actions: it would teach us to blunt the edge of our censures upon ourselves, our own hard hearts and rebellious wills within, that they might remain no more sharp against others, than is needful for their good.

And this would cut short those that are without, from a great deal of provisions of evil-speaking against Christians, that they many times are furnished with by Christians themselves, through their uncharitable carriage one towards another. However, this being the hard measure that they always find in the world, it is their wisdom to consider it aright, and to study that good which, according to the Apostle's advice, may be extracted out of it, and that is the second thing to be spoken to.

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles.] As the sovereign power of drawing good out of evil resides in God, and argues His primitive goodness, so He teacheth his own children some faculty this way, that they may resemble Him in it. He teacheth them to draw sweetness out of their bitterest afflictions, and increase of inward peace from their outward troubles. And as these buffetings of the tongue are no small part of their sufferings, so they reap no small benefit by them many ways; particularly in this one, that they order their conversation the better, and walk the more exactly for it.

And this no doubt, in Divine providence, is intended and ordered for their good, as are all their other trials. The sharp censures and evil speakings that a Christian is encompassed with in the world, is no other than a hedge of thorns set on every side, that he go not out of his way, but keep straight on in it betwixt them, not declining to the right hand nor to the left;

whereas, if they found nothing but the favour and good opinion of the world, they might, as in a way unhedged, be subject to expatiate and wander out into the meadows of carnal pleasures that are about them, which would call and allure them, and often divert them from their journey.

And thus it might fall out, that Christians would deserve censure and evil speakings the more, if they did not usually suffer them undeserved. This then turns into a great advantage to them, making their conduct more answerable to those two things that our Saviour joins, *watch and pray;* causing them to be the more vigilant over themselves, and the more earnest with God for His watching over them and conducting of them. *Make my ways straight*, says David, *because of mine enemies* (Psal. v. 8): the word is, *my observers*, or those that scan my ways, every foot of them, that examine them as a verse, or as a song of music; if there be but a wrong measure in them, they will not let it slip, but will be sure to mark it.

And if the enemies of the godly wait for their halting, shall not they scan their own paths themselves, that they may not halt? Shall they not examine them to order them, as the wicked do to censure them: still depending wholly upon the Spirit of God as their guide, *to lead them into all truth*, and to teach them how *to order their conversation aright*, that it may be all of a piece, holy and blameless, and still like itself?

Honest.] Fair or beautiful: the same word doth fitly signify goodness and beauty, for that which is the truest and most lasting beauty, grows fresher in old age, as the Psalmist speaks of the righteous, *those that be planted in the house of God* (Psal. xcii. 12—14). Could the beauty of virtue be seen, said a philosopher, it would draw all to love it. A Christian, holy conversation hath such a beauty, that when they who are strangers to it begin to discern it at all aright, they cannot choose but love it; and where it begets not love, yet it silences calumny, or at least evinces its falsehood.

The goodness or beauty of a Christian's conversation consisting in symmetry and conformity to the word of God as its rule,

he ought diligently to study that rule, and to square his ways by it; not to walk at random, but to apply that rule to every step at home and abroad, and to be as careful to keep the beauty of his ways unspotted, as those women are of their faces and attire who are most studious of comeliness.

But so far are we who call ourselves Christians from this exact regard of our conversation, that the most part not only have many foul spots, but they themselves, and all their ways, are nothing but defilement, all one spot;—as our Apostle calls them, *blots are they and spots* (2 Pet. ii. 13). And even they who are Christians indeed, yet are not so watchful and accurate in all their ways as becomes them, but stain their *holy profession* either with pride, or covetousness, or contentions, or some other such like uncomeliness.

Let us all therefore resolve more to study this good and comely conversation the Apostle here exhorts to, that it may be such as *becometh the Gospel of Christ*, as St. Paul desires his Philippians, (ch. i., v. 27.) And if you live amongst profane persons, who will be to you as the unbelieving Gentiles were to these believing Jews who lived amongst them, traducers of you, and given to speak evil of you, and of religion in you, trouble not yourselves with many apologies and clearings, when you are evil-spoken of, but let the track of your life answer for you, your *honest* and *blameless conversation:* that will be the shortest, and most real and effectual way of confuting all obloquies; as when one in the schools was proving by a sophistical argument, that there could be no motion, the philosopher answered it fully and shortly, by rising up and walking. If thou wouldst pay them home, this is a kind of revenge not only allowed thee, but recommended to thee; be avenged on evil speakings by well-doing, shame them from it. It was a king that said, *It was kingly to do well and be ill-spoken of.* Well may Christians acknowledge it to be true, when they consider that it was the lot of their king, Jesus Christ; and well may they be content, seeing he hath made them likewise *kings*, (as we heard, ver. 9,) to be conformable

to him in this too, this kingly way of suffering, to be unjustly evil-spoken of, and still to go on in doing the more good; always aiming, in so doing, (as our Lord did,) at the glory of our Heavenly Father. This is the third thing.

That they may glorify God in the day of their visitation. He says not, They shall praise or commend you, but *shall glorify God.* In what way soever this time, this *day of visitation* be taken, the effect itself is this, *They shall glorify God.* It is this the Apostle still holds before their eye, as that upon which a Christian doth willingly set his eye, and keep it fixed in all his ways. He doth not teach them to be sensible of their own esteem as it concerns themselves, but only as the glory of their God is interested in it. Were it not for this, a generous-minded Christian could set a very light rate upon all the thoughts and speeches of men concerning him, whether good or bad; and could easily drown all their mistakes in the conscience of the favour and approbation of his God. *It is a very small thing for me to be judged of you, or of the day of man: he that judgeth me, is the Lord.* (1 Cor. iv. 3.) Man hath a day of judging, but it, and his judgment with it, soon passes away; but God hath *His day*, and it, together with His sentence, abideth for ever, as the Apostle there adds. As if he should say, *I appeal to God;* but considering that the religion he professes, and the God whom he worships in that religion, are wronged by those reproaches, and that the calumnies cast upon Christians reflect upon their Lord, this is the thing that makes him sensible; he feels on that side only. *The reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me*, says the Psalmist: and this makes a Christian desirous to vindicate, even to men, his religion and his God, without regard to himself; because he may say, *the reproaches of them that reproach* only *me, have fallen upon Thee.* (Psal. lxix. 9.)

This is his intent in the holiness and integrity of his life, that God may be glorified; this is the axis about which all *this good conversation* moves and turns continually.

And he that forgets this, let his conversation be never so

plausible and spotless, knows not what it is to be a Christian. As they say of the eagles, who try their young ones, whether they be of the right kind or not, by holding them before the sun, and if they can look steadfastly upon it, they own them, if not, they throw them away: this is the true evidence of an upright and real Christian, to have a steadfast eye on the glory of God, the *Father of Lights*. In all, let God be glorified, says the Christian, and that suffices: that is the sum of his desires. He is far from glorying in himself, or seekin to raise himself, for he knows that of himself he is nothing, but by the *free grace of God he is what he is*. "Whence any glorying to thee, rottenness and dust?" says St. Bernard. "Whence is it to thee, if thou art holy? Is it not the Holy Spirit that hath sanctified thee? If thou couldst work miracles, though they were done by thy hand, yet it were not by thy power, but by the power of God."

To the end that my glory may sing praise unto thee, says David (Psal. xxx. 12). Whether his tongue, or his soul, or both, be meant, what he calls *his glory*, he shews us, and what use he hath for it, namely, to give the Lord glory, to sing His praises, and that then it was truly David's glory when it was so employed, in giving glory to Him whose peculiar due glory is. What have we to do in the world as His creatures, once and again His creatures, His new creatures, *created unto good works*, but to exercise ourselves in those, and by those to advance His glory, that all may return to Him from whom all is, as the rivers run back to the sea from whence they came? *Of Him and through Him*, and therefore, *for Him are all things*, says the Apostle (Rom. xi. 36.) They that serve base gods, seek how to advance and aggrandize them. The covetous man studies to make his *Mammon* as great as he can, all his thoughts and pains run upon that service, and so do the voluptuous and ambitious for theirs; and shall not they who profess themselves to be the servants of the Only Great and the Only True God, have their hearts much more, at least as much, possessed with desires of honouring and exalting *Him?* Should

not this be their predominant design and thought?—What way shall I most advance the glory of my God? How shall I, who am under stronger obligations than they all, set in with the heavens and the earth, and the other creatures, to declare His excellency, His greatness, and His goodness?

In the day of visitation.] The beholding of your good works may work this in them, that they may be gained to acknowledge and embrace that religion, and that God, which for the present they reject; but that it may be thus, they must be visited with that same light and grace from above, which hath sanctified you. This, I conceive, is the sense of this word, though it may be, and is, taken divers other ways by interpreters. Possibly, in this *day of visitation* is implied the clearer preaching of the Gospel amongst those Gentiles, where the dispersed Jews dwelt; and that when they should compare the light of that doctrine with the light of their lives, and find the agreement betwixt them, that might be helpful to their effectual calling, and so they might glorify God. But to the end that they might do thus indeed, there must be, along with the word of God, and the good works of his people, a particular visiting of their souls by the Spirit of God. Your good conversation may be one good mean of their conversion; therefore this may be a motive to that; but to make it an effectual mean, this day of gracious visitation must dawn upon them; *the day-spring from on high* must visit them, as it is Luke i. 7, 8.

Ver. 13. Submit yourselves unto every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the King, as supreme,

Ver. 14. Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

It is one of the falsest, and yet one of the commonest prejudices that the world hath always entertained against true religion, that it is an enemy to civil power and government. The adversaries of the Jews charged this fault upon their city, the then seat of the true worship of God (Ezra iv. 15). The

Jews charged it upon the preachers of the Christian religion, (Acts xvii. 7,) as they pretended the same quarrel against Christ himself. And generally, the enemies of the Christians of primitive times, loaded them with the slander of rebellion and contempt of authority. Therefore our Apostle, descending to particular rules of Christian life, by which it may be blameless, and silence calumny, begins with this, not only as a thing of prime importance in itself, but as particularly fit for those he wrote to, being at once both Jews and Christians, for the clearing of themselves and their religion: *Submit yourselves*, &c.

There are in the words divers particulars to be considered, all concurring to press this main duty of obedience to magistrates, not only as well consistent with true religion, but as indeed inseparable from it. Not to parcel out the words into many pieces, they may, I conceive, be all not unfitly comprised under these two: 1. The extent of this duty: 2. The ground of it.

1. The extent of the duty, viz., *To all civil power*, of what kind soever, for the time received and authorised; there being no need of questioning what was the rise and original of civil power, either in the nature of it, or in the persons of those that are in possession of it. For if you will trace them quite through in the succession of ages, and narrowly eye their whole circle, there be few crowns in the world, in which there will not be found some crack or other, more or less. If you look on those great monarchies in Daniel's vision, you see one of them built up upon the ruins of another; and all of them represented by terrible devouring beasts of monstrous shape. And whether the Roman empire be the fourth there, as many take it, or not, yet, in the things spoken of that fourth, as well as of the rest, it is inferior to none of them, enlarging itself by conquests in all parts of the world. And under it were the provinces to which this epistle is addressed; yet the Apostle enjoins his brethren subjection and obedience to its authority.

Nor is it a question so to be moved as to suspend, or at all abate, our obedience to that which possesses in the present

where we live, what form of government is most just and commodious.

God hath indeed been more express in the officers and government of his own house, his Church; but civil societies he hath left at liberty, in the choosing and modelling of civil government, though always, indeed, over-ruling their choice and changes in that, by the secret hand of His wise and powerful providence. Yet he hath set them no particular rule touching the frame of it; only the common rule of equity and justice ought to be regarded, both in the contriving and managing of government. Nevertheless, though it be some way defective in both, those that are subject to it, are in all things lawful to submit to its authority, whether supreme or subordinate; as we have it here expressly, *Whether to the king as supreme*, (namely, to the Emperor,) or *to the governors sent by him*;— which though a judicious interpreter refers to God, and will not admit of any other sense, yet it seems most suitable both to the words, and to the nature of the government of those provinces, to take that word *To him*, as relating to the king; for the expression, *them that are sent*, answers to the other, *the king as supreme*, and so is a very clear designation of the inferior governors of those times and places. And whatsoever was their end who sent them, and their carriage who were sent, that which the Apostle adds, expresses the end for which they should be sent to govern, and at which they should aim in governing, as the true end of all government. And though they were not fully true to that end in their deportment, but possibly did many things unjustly, yet, as God hath ordained authority for this end, there is always so much justice in the most depraved government, as renders it a public good, and therefore puts upon inferiors an obligation to obedience: and this leads us to consider,

2dly, The ground of this duty. The main ground of submitting to human authority, is the interest that Divine authority hath in it, God having both appointed civil government as a common good amongst men, and particularly commanded his

people obedience to it, as a particular good to them, and a thing very suitable with their profession: it is *for the Lord's sake.* This word carries the whole weight of the duty, and is a counter-balance to the former, which seems to be therefore on purpose so expressed, that this may answer it. Although civil authority, in regard of particular forms of government, and the choice of particular persons to govern, is but a human ordinance, or *man's creature,* as the word is, yet, both the good of government, and the duty of subjection to it, are God's ordinance; and therefore, *for His sake submit yourselves.*

[1.] God hath in general instituted civil government for the good of human society, and still there is good in it. Tyranny is better than anarchy. [2.] It is by His providence that men are advanced to places of authority. (See Psal. lxxv. 6, 7; Dan. iv. 25; John xix. 11.) [3.] It is His command, that obedience be yielded to them. (Rom. xiii. 1; Tit. iii. 1, &c.) And the consideration of this ties a Christian to all loyalty and due obedience, which, being still *for the Lord's sake,* cannot hold in anything that is against the Lord's own command; for kings and rulers, in such a case, leave their station. Now the subjection here enjoined is, ὑποτάγητε, *Be subject* to them, as it were in your rank, still in subordination to God; but if they go out of that even line, follow them not. They that obey the unlawful commands of kings, do it in regard to *their god,* no question but that *their god is their belly,* or their ambition, or their avarice.

But not only ought the exercise of authority, and submission to it, to be confined to things just and lawful in themselves, but the very purpose of the heart, both in command and obedience, should be *in the Lord,* and *for His sake.* This is the only straight, and the only safe rule, both for rulers and for people to walk by. Would Kings and the other Powers of the world consider the supremacy and greatness of that King of whom they hold all their crowns and dignities, they would be no less careful of their submission and homage to Him, than they are desirous of their people's submission to themselves.

I will not speak at all of their civil obligations to their people, and the covenant of justice that with good reason is betwixt them in the fundamental constitutions of all well-ordered kingdoms; nor meddle with that point,—the dependence that human authority hath upon the societies of men over whom it is, according to which it is here called *man's ordinance*, or *creature*, ἀνθρωπίνη κτίσει. This is a thing that the greatest and most absolute of princes cannot deny, that all their authority is dependent upon the great God, both as the Author of it in the general, and the sovereign Disposer of it to particular men, *giving the kingdoms of the earth to whom He will.* (Dan. iv. 25.) And therefore He may most justly require obedience and fealty of them, that they *serve the Lord in fear*, and if they rejoice in their dignities over men, yet that they do it with *trembling*, under a sense of their duty to God, and that they throw down their crowns at the feet of Christ, *the Lord's anointed.*

And to this they are the more obliged, considering that religion and the Gospel of Christ do so much press the duty of their people's obedience to them; so that they wrong both Christianity and themselves very far, in mistaking it as an enemy to their authority, when it is so far from prejudicing it, that it confirms it, and pleads for it. Surely they do most ungratefully requite the Lord and His Christ, when they say, (as Psal. ii.,) *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* Whereas the Lord binds the cords of kings and their authority fast upon their people; not the cords of tyranny indeed, to bind the subjects as beasts to be sacrifices to the passion of their rulers, but the cords of just and due obedience to their kings and governors. The Lord doth (as you see here) bind it upon all that profess His name, and strengthens it by the respect His people carry to Himself, enjoining them that, *for His sake*, they would obey their rulers. So that kings need not fear true religion, that it will ever favour any thing that can justly be called rebellion; on the contrary, it still urges loyalty and obedience: so that as they ought in duty, they may in true policy and wisdom, befriend true

religion, as a special friend to their authority, and hate that religion of *Rome* which is indeed rebellion, and that *mother of abominations* who makes the *kings of the earth drunk with her cup*, and makes them dream of increase of authority while they are truly on the losing hand. But besides that they owe their power to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, by so employing themselves as to strengthen it, they do themselves good; they confirm their own thrones, when they erect His: as it was said of Cæsar, that by setting up Pompey's statue, he settled and fastened his own.

But it is an evil too natural to men, to forget the true end and use of any good the Lord confers on them. And thus kings and rulers too often consider not for what they are exalted; they think it is for themselves, to honour and please themselves, and not to honour God, and benefit their people, to encourage and reward the good, (as here it is,) and to punish the wicked. They are set on high for the good of those that are below them, that they may be refreshed with their light and influence; as the lights of Heaven are set there in the highest parts of the world, for the use and benefit of the very lowest. God set them in the firmament of Heaven, but to what end? *To give light upon the earth.* (Gen. i. 15.) And the mountains are raised above the rest of the earth, not to be places of prey and robbery, as sometimes they are turned to be, but to send forth streams from their springs into the valleys, and make them fertile; these mountains and hills (greater and lesser rulers, higher and lower) are to send forth to the people the *streams of righteousness and peace.* (Psal. lxxii. 31.)

But it is the corruption and misery of man's nature, that he doth not know, and can hardly be persuaded to learn, either how to command aright, or how to obey; and no doubt many of those that can see and blame the injustice of others in authority, would be more guilty that way themselves, if they had the same power.

It is the pride and self-love of our nature, that begets disobedience in inferiors, and violence and injustice in superiors;

that depraved humour which ties to every kind of government a propension to a particular disease; which makes royalty easily degenerate into tyranny, the government of nobles into faction, and popular government into confusion.

As civil authority, and subjection to it, are the institution of God, so the peaceable correspondence of these two, just government and due obedience, is the special gift of God's own hand, and a prime blessing to states and kingdoms; and the troubling and interruption of their course is one of the highest public judgments by which the Lord punishes oftentimes the other sins both of rulers and people. And whatsoever be the cause, and on which side soever be the justice of the cause, it cannot be looked upon but as a heavy plague, and the fruit of many and great provocations, when kings and their people, who should be a mutual blessing and honour to each other, are turned into scourges one to another, or into a devouring fire; as it is in the parable (Judg. ix. 20): *Fire going forth from Abimelech to devour the men of Shechem, and fire from Shechem to devour Abimelech.*

Ver. 15. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Ver. 16. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

This continues the same reason of the same Christian duty: if they will obey the Lord, then they must obey civil powers, for that is His will, and they will not deny their obligation to Him, for they are His servants (v. 16). The words, indeed, are more general than the former, but they relate chiefly, in this place, to the particular in hand, implying that neither in that kind, nor in any other, Christians should dishonour their profession, and abuse their liberty, mistaking it as an exemption from those duties to which it doth more straightly tie them. So then, the point of civil obedience, and all other good conversation amongst men, is here recommended to Christians, as conformable to the will of God, and the most effectual clearing

of their profession, and very agreeable to their Christian liberty.

The will of God.] This is the strongest and most binding reason that can be used to a Christian mind, which hath resigned itself to be governed by that rule, to have *the will of God* for its law. Whatsoever is required of it upon that warrant, it cannot refuse. Although it cross a man's own humour, or his private interest, yet, if his heart be subjected to the will of God, he will not stand with Him in any thing. One word from God, *I will have it so,* silences all, and carries it against all opposition.

It were a great point, if we could be persuaded to esteem duly of this: it were indeed all. It would make light and easy work in those things that go so hardly on with us, though we are daily exhorted to them. Is it the will of God that I should live soberly? Then, though my own corrupt will and my companions be against it, yet it must be so. Wills He that I forbear cursing and oaths, though it is my custom to use them? Yet I must offer violence to my custom, and go against the stream of all their customs that are round about me, to obey His will, who wills all things justly and holily. Will He have my charity not only liberal in giving, but in forgiving, and real and hearty in both? Will He have me *bless them that curse me, and do good to them that hate me, and love mine enemies?* Though the world counts it a hard task, and my own corrupt heart possibly finds it so, yet it shall be done; and not as upon unpleasant necessity, but willingly, and cheerfully, and with the more delight because it is difficult; for so it proves my obedience the more, and my love to Him whose will it is. Though mine enemies deserve not my love, yet He who bids me love them, does; and if He will have this the touchstone to try the uprightness of my love to Him, shall it fail there? No, His will commands me so absolutely, and He Himself is so lovely, that there can be nobody so unlovely in themselves, or to me, but I can love them upon His command, and for His sake.

But that it may be thus, there must be a renewed frame of mind, by which a man may renounce the world and the forms of it, and himself, and his own sinful heart, and its way, to study and follow the only *good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*, (Rom. xii. 2,) to move most in that line, not willingly declining to either hand, to have his whole mind taken up in searching it, and his whole heart in embracing it. *Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*, says the Apostle Paul, (Eph. v. 17,) being about to exhort to particular duties, as our Apostle here is doing.

This is the task of a Christian, to understand his Lord's will, and with a practical understanding, that he may walk in all well pleasing unto God. Thus the Apostle likewise exhorts the Thessalonians pathetically, (1 Ep. ch. iv., v. 1,) and adds, *This is the will of God, even your sanctification.* And he then proceeds particularly against uncleanness and deceit, &c.

Let this, then, be your endeavour, to have your wills crucified to whatsoever is sinful, yea to will outward indifferent things with a kind of indifferency. The most things that men are so stiff in, are not worth an earnest willing. In a word, it were the only happy and truly spiritual temper to have our will quite rooted out, and the will of God placed in its stead; to have no other will than His, that it might constantly, yea (so to speak) identically, follow it in all things. This is the will of God, therefore it is mine.

That with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.] The duties of the Second Table, or of well doing towards men, are more obvious to men devoid of religion, than those that have an immediate relation to God; and therefore (as in other Epistles) the Apostle is here particular in these, for the vindicating of religion to them that are without. Ignorance usually is loud and prattling, making a mighty noise, and so hath need of a *muzzle to silence it*, as the word φιμοῦν imports. They that were ready to speak evil of religion, are called *witless* or foolish men; there was perverseness in their ignorance, as the word ἀφρόνων intimates. And generally, all

kinds of evil speakings and uncharitable censurings, do argue a foolish, worthless mind whence they proceed; and yet, they are the usual divertisement of the greatest part of mankind, and take up very much of their converse and discourse; which is an evidence of the baseness and perverseness of their minds. For, whereas those that have most real goodness, delight most to observe what is good and commendable in others, and to pass by their blemishes, it is the true character of vile unworthy persons, (as scurvy flies sit upon sores,) to skip over all the good that is in men, and fasten upon their infirmities.

But especially doth it discover *ignorance and folly*, to turn the failings of men to the disadvantage of religion. None can be such enemies to it but they that know it not, and see not the beauty that is in it. However, the way to silence them, we see, is by *well doing;* that silences them more than whole volumes of Apologies. When a Christian walks irreprovably, his enemies have nowhere to fasten their teeth on him, but are forced to gnaw their own malignant tongues. As it secures the godly, thus to stop the lying mouths of foolish men, so it is as painful to them to be thus stopped as muzzling is to beasts, and it punishes their malice.

And this is a wise Christian's way, instead of impatiently fretting at the mistakes or wilful miscensures of men, to keep still on his calm temper of mind, and upright course of life, and silent innocence; this, as a rock, breaks the waves into foam that roar about it.

As free.] This, the Apostle adds, lest any should so far mistake the nature of their Christian liberty, as to dream of an exemption from obedience either to God, or to men for His sake, and according to His appointment. Their freedom he grants, but would have them understand aright what it is. I cannot here insist at large on the spiritual freedom of Christians; nor is it here needful, being mentioned only for the clearing of it in this point; but free they are, and they only, who are partakers of this liberty. *If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed.* (John viii. 36.) The rest are slaves to Satan, and

the world and their own lusts; as the Israelites in Egypt, working in the clay under hard task-masters.

Much discourse hath been spent, and much ink hath been spilt upon the debate of *free-will*, but truly, all the liberty it hath, till the Son and His Spirit free it, is that miserable freedom the Apostle speaks of, Rom. vi. 20, *While ye were servants to sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

And as we are naturally subject to the vile drudgery of sin, so we are condemned to the proper *wages of sin*, which the Apostle there tells us is *death*, according to the just sentence of the Law. But our Lord Christ was anointed for this purpose, *to set us free*, both to work and to publish liberty, to *proclaim liberty to captives, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound.* (Isa. lxi. 1.) Having paid our complete ransom, He sends His word as the message, and His Spirit to perform it effectually, to set us free, to let us know it, and to bring us out of prison. He was bound and scourged, as a slave or malefactor, to purchase us this liberty; therefore ought it to be our special care, first, to have part in it, and then to be like it, and *stand fast in it* in all points.

But that we deceive not ourselves, as too many do who have no portion in this liberty, we ought to know that it is not *to* inordinate walking and licentiousness, as our liberty, that we are called, but *from* them, as our thraldom; we are not called from obedience, but to it. Therefore beware that you shuffle in, under this specious name of *liberty*, nothing that belongs not to it. Make it not *a cloak of maliciousness;* it is too precious a garment for so base a use. Liberty is indeed Christ's livery that he gives to all his followers; but to live suitably to it, is not to live in wickedness or disobedience of any kind, but in obedience and holiness. You are called to be *the servants of God*, and that is your dignity and your liberty.

The Apostles of this Gospel of liberty gloried in this title, *The servants of Jesus Christ.* David before that Psalm of praise for his victories and exaltations, being now settled on his throne, prefixes, as more honour than all these, *A Psalm of*

David, the servant of the Lord (Psal. xviii. 1). It is the only true happiness both of kings and their subjects, to be His subjects. It is the glory of the angels, to be His *ministering spirits*. The more we attain unto the faculty of serving Him cheerfully and diligently, the more still we find of this spiritual liberty, and have the more joy in it. As it is the most honourable, it is likewise the most comfortable and most gainful service; and they that once know it, will never change it for any other in the world. Oh! that we could live as His servants, employing all our industry to do Him service in the condition and place wherein He hath set us, whatsoever it is, and as faithful servants, more careful of his affairs than of our own, accounting it our main business to seek the advancement of his glory. *Happy is the servant whom the Master, when he cometh, shall find so doing.* (Matth. xxiv. 46.)

Ver. 17. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

This is a precious cluster of Divine precepts. The whole face of the heavens is adorned with stars, but they are of different magnitudes, and in some parts they are thicker set than in others: thus is it likewise in the holy Scriptures. And these are the two books that the Psalmist sets open before us (Psalm xix.); the heavens, as a choice piece of the works of God, instructing us, and the word of God, more full and clear than they. Here is a constellation of very bright stars near together. These words have very briefly, and yet not obscured by briefness, but withal very plainly, the sum of our duty towards God and men; to men both in general, *Honour all men*, and in special relations,—in their Christian or religious relation, *Love the brotherhood*, and in a chief civil relation, *Honour the king*. And our whole duty to God, comprised under the name of *His fear*, is set in the middle betwixt these, as the common spring of all duty to men, and of all due observance of it, and the sovereign rule by which it is to be regulated.

I shall speak of them as they lie in the text. We need not

labour about the connexion; for in such variety of brief practical directions, it hath not such places as in doctrinal discourses. The Apostle having spoken of one particular wherein he would have his brethren to clear and commend their Christian profession, now accumulates these directions as most necessary, and afterwards goes on to particular duties of servants, &c. But first observe, in general, how plain and easy, and how few are those things that are the rule of our life; no dark sentences to puzzle the understanding, nor large discourses and long periods to burden the memory; they are all plain; there *is nothing wreathed* nor distorted in them, as Wisdom speaks of her instructions, Prov. viii. 8.

And this gives check to a double folly amongst men, contrary the one to the other, but both agreeing in mistaking and wronging the word of God; the one is of those that despise the word, and that doctrine and preaching that is conformable to it, for its plainness and simplicity; the other of those that complain of its difficulty and darkness. As for the first, they certainly do not take the true end for which the word is designed, that it is the law of our life; (and it is mainly requisite in laws, that they be both brief and clear;) that it is our guide and light to happiness; and if that which ought to be our *light, be darkness, how great will that darkness be!*

It is true, (but I am not now to insist on this point,) that there be dark and deep passages in Scripture, for the exercise, yea, for the humbling, yea, for the amazing and astonishing of the sharpest-sighted readers. But this argues much the pride and vanity of men's minds, when they busy themselves only in those, and throw aside altogether the most necessary, which are therefore the easiest and plainest truths in it. As in nature, the commodities that are of greatest necessity God hath made most common and easiest to be had, so, in religion, such instructions as these now in our hands, are given us to live and walk by; and in the search of things that are more obscure, and less useful, men evidence that they had rather be learned than holy, and have still more mind to the *tree of knowledge* than

the *tree of life*. And in hearing of the word, are not they who are any whit more knowing than ordinary, still gaping after new notions, after something to add to the stock of their speculative and discoursing knowledge, loathing this daily manna, these profitable exhortations, and *requiring meat for their lust?* There is an intemperance of the mind, as well as of the mouth. You would think it, and, may be, not spare to call it, a poor cold sermon, that were made up of such plain precepts as these, *Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honour the king;* and yet, this is the language of God, it is His way, this foolish despicable way, by which He guides and brings to heaven them that believe.

Again, we have others that are still complaining of the *difficulty and darkness* of the word of God and Divine truths; to say nothing of Rome's doctrine, who talks thus, in order to excuse her sacrilege of stealing away the word from the people of God; (a senseless pretext though it were true; because the word is dark of itself, should it therefore be made darker, by locking it up in an unknown tongue?) but we speak of the common vulgar excuse, which the gross, ignorant profaneness of many seeks to shroud itself under, that they are not learned, and cannot reach the doctrine of the Scriptures. There be deep mysteries there indeed: but what say you to these things, such rules as these, *Honour all men*, &c.? Are such as these riddles, that you cannot know their meaning? Rather, do not all understand them, and all neglect them? Why set you not on to do these? and then you should understand more. *A good understanding have all they that do His commandments*, says the Psalmist (Psal. cxi. 10). As one said well, "The best way to understand the mysterious and high discourse in the beginning of St. Paul's Epistles, is, to begin at the practice of those rules and precepts that are in the latter end of them." The way to attain to know more is to *receive the truth in the love of it*, and to obey what you know. The truth is, such truths as these will leave you inexcusable, even the most ignorant of you. You cannot but know, you hear often, that you ought to

love one another, and *to fear God*, &c., and yet, you never apply yourselves in earnest to the practice of these things, as will appear to your own consciences, if they deal honestly with you in the particulars.

Honour all men.] Honour, in a narrower sense, is not a universal due to all, but peculiar to some kinds of persons. Of this the Apostle speaks, (Rom. xiii. 8,) *Honour to whom honour is due*, and that in different degrees, to parents, to masters, and other superiors. There is an honour that hath, as it were, Cæsar's image and superscription on it, and so is particularly due to him; as here it follows, *Honour the king.* But there is something that goes not unfitly under the name of honour, generally due to every man without exception; and it consists, as all honour doth, partly in inward esteem of them, partly in outward behaviour towards them. And the former must be the ground and cause of the latter.

We owe not the same measure of esteem to all. We may, yea, we ought to take notice of the different outward quality, or inward graces and gifts of men; nor is it a fault to perceive the shallowness and weakness of men with whom we converse, and to esteem more highly those on whom God hath conferred more of such things as are truly worthy of esteem. But unto the meanest we do owe some measure of esteem, 1st, Negatively. We are not to entertain despising, disdainful thoughts of any, how worthless and mean soever. As the admiring of men, the very best, is a foolish excess on the one hand, so, the total contemning of any, the very poorest, is against this rule on the other; for that *contemning of vile persons*, the Psalmist speaks of, (Psal. xv. 3,) and commends, is the dislike and hatred of their sin, which is their vileness, and the not accounting them, for outward respects, worthy of such esteem as their wickedness does, as it were, strip them of. 2dly, We are to observe and respect the smallest good that is in any. Although a Christian be never so base in his outward condition, in body or mind, of very mean intellectuals and natural endowments,

yet, they who know the worth of spiritual things, will esteem the grace of God that is in him, in the midst of all those disadvantages, as a pearl in a rough shell. Grace carries still its own worth, though under a deformed body and ragged garments, yea, though they have but a small measure of that neither —the very lowest degree of grace; as a pearl of the least size, or a small piece of gold, yet men will not throw it away, but, as they say, the least shavings of gold are worth the keeping. The Jews would not willingly tread upon the smallest piece of paper in their way, but took it up; for possibly, said they, the name of God may be on it. Though there was a little superstition in this, yet truly there is nothing but good religion in it, if we apply it to men. Trample not on any; there may be some work of grace there, that thou knowest not of. The name of God may be written upon that soul thou treadest on; it may be a soul that Christ thought so much of, as to give His precious blood for it; therefore despise it not. Much more, I say, if thou canst perceive any appearance that it is such a one, oughtest thou to esteem it. Wheresoever thou findest the least trait of Christ's image, if thou lovest Him, thou wilt honour it; or if there be nothing of this to be found in him thou lookest on, yet observe what common gift of any kind God hath bestowed on him, judgment, or memory, or faculty in his calling, or any such thing, for these in their degree are to be esteemed, and the person for them. And as there is no man so complete as to have the advantage in every thing, so there is no man so low and unworthy but he hath something wherein he is preferable even to those that in other respects are much more excellent. Or imagine thou canst find nothing else in some men, yet honour thy own nature; esteem humanity in them, especially since humanity is exalted in Christ to be one with the Deity: account of the individual as a man. And, along with this esteem goes, 3dly, that general good will and affection due to men: whereas there are many who do not only outwardly express, but inwardly bear more

regard to some dog or horse that they love, than to poor distressed men, and in so doing, do reflect dishonour upon themselves, and upon mankind.

The outward behaviour wherein we owe honour to all, is nothing but a conformity to this inward temper of mind; for he that inwardly despiseth none, but esteemeth the good that is in the lowest, or at least esteemeth them in that they are men, and loves them as such, will accordingly use no outward sign of disdain of any; he will not have a scornful eye, nor a reproachful tongue to move at any, not the meanest of his servants, nor the worst of his enemies; but, on the contrary, will acknowledge the good that is in every man, and give unto all that outward respect that is convenient for them, and that they are capable of, and will be ready to do them good as he hath opportunity and ability.

But instead of walking by this rule of *honouring all men*, what is there almost to be found amongst men, but a perverse proneness to dishonour one another, and every man ready to dishonour all men, that he may honour himself, reckoning that what he gives to others is lost to himself, and taking what he detracts from others, as good booty to make up himself? Set aside men's own interest, and that common civility which for their own credit they use one with another, and truly there will be found very little of this real respect to others, proceeding from obedience to God and love to men,—little disposition to be tender of their reputation and good name, and their welfare as of our own, (for so the rule is,) but we shall find mutual disesteem and defamation filling almost all societies.

And the bitter root of this iniquity is, that wicked, accursed self-love, which dwells in us. Every man is naturally his own grand idol, would be esteemed and honoured by any means, and to magnify that idol *self*, kills the good name and esteem of others in sacrifice to it. Hence, the narrow observing eye and broad speaking tongue, upon any thing that tends to the dishonour of others; and where other things fail, the disdainful upbraiding of their birth, or calling, or any thing that

comes next to hand, serves for a reproach. And hence arises a great part of the jars and strifes amongst men, the most part being drunk with an over-weening opinion of themselves, and the unworthiest the most so: *The sluggard*, says Solomon, *is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason* (Prov. xxvi. 16); and not finding others of their mind, this frets and troubles them. They take the ready course to deceive themselves; for they look with both eyes on the failings and defects of others, and scarcely give their good qualities half an eye; while, on the contrary, in themselves they study to the full their own advantages, and their weaknesses and defects (as one says) they skip over, as children do the hard words in their lesson, that are troublesome to read; and making this uneven parallel, what wonder if the result be a gross mistake of themselves! Men over-rate themselves at home; they reckon that they ought to be regarded, and that their mind should carry it; and when they come abroad, and are crossed in this, this puts them out of all temper.

But the humble man, as he is more conformable to this Divine rule, so he hath more peace by it: for he sets so low a rate upon himself in his own thoughts, that it is scarcely possible for any to go lower in judging of him; and therefore, as he pays due respect to others to the full, and gives no ground of quarrel that way, so he challenges no such debt to himself, and thus avoids the usual contests that arise in this. *Only by pride comes contention*, says Solomon (Prov. xiii. 0). A man that will walk abroad in a crowded street, cannot choose but be often jostled; but he that contracts himself, passes through more easily.

Study, therefore, this excellent grace of humility; not the personated acting of it in appearance, which may be a chief agent for pride, but true lowliness of mind, which will make you to be nothing in your own eyes, and content to be so in the eyes of others. Then will you obey this word; you will esteem all men as is meet, and not be troubled though all men disesteem you. As this humility is a precious grace, so it is the

preserver of all other graces, and without it, (if they could be without it,) they were but as a box of precious powder carried in the wind without a cover, in danger of being scattered and blown away. If you would have honour, there is an ambition both allowed you, and worthy of you, whosoever you are, φιλοτιμούμεθα; (Rom. ii. 7; 2 Cor. v. 9;) other honour, though it have its Hebrew name from *weight*, is all too light, and weighs only with cares and troubles.

Love the brotherhood.] There is a love, as we said, due to all, included under that word of *honouring all*, but a peculiar love to our Christian brethren, whom the Apostle Paul calls by a like word, *the household of faith*. (Gal. vi. 10.)

Christian brethren are united by a three-fold cord; two of them are common to other men, but the third is the strongest, and theirs peculiarly. Their bodies are descended of the same man, and their souls of the same God; but their new life, by which they are most entirely brethren, is derived from the same God-man, Jesus Christ; yea, in him, they are all one body, receiving life from Him their glorious Head, who is called *the first-born among many brethren*. (Rom. viii. 29.) And as His unspeakable love was the source of this new being and fraternity, so doubtless it cannot but produce indissoluble love amongst them that are partakers of it. The spirit of love and concord is that precious ointment that runs down from the head of our great High Priest, to the skirts of His garment. The life of Christ and this law of love are combined, and cannot be severed. Can there be enmity betwixt those hearts that meet in Him? Why do you pretend yourselves Christians, and yet remain not only strangers to this love, but most contrary to it, *biters and devourers* one of another, and will not be convinced of the great guiltiness and uncomeliness of strifes and envyings amongst you? Is this the badge that Christ hath left his brethren, to wrangle and malign one another? Do you not know, on the contrary, that they are to be known by mutual love! *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye love one another*. (John xiii. 35.) How often doth that

beloved disciple press this! He drank deep of that well-spring of love that was in the breast on which he leaned, and (if they relate aright) he died exhorting this, *Love one another.* Oh! that there were more of this love of Christ in our hearts, arising from the sense of His love to us! That would teach this mutual love more effectually, which the preaching of it may set before us, but, without that other teaching, cannot work within us. Why do we still hear these things in vain! Do we believe what the love of Christ did to us, and suffered for us? And will we do nothing for Him,—not forgive a shadow, a fancy of injury, much less a real one, for His sake, and love him that wronged us, whoever he be, but especially being one of our brethren in this spiritual sense?

Many are the duties of this peculiar fraternal love; that mutual converse, and admonition, and reproof, and comforting, and other duties which are fallen into neglect, not only amongst formal, but even amongst real Christians. Let us entreat more of His Spirit who is love, and that will remedy this evil.

Fear God.] All the rules of equity and charity amongst men flow from a higher principle, and depend upon it; and there is no right observing of them without due regard to that; therefore this word, which expresses that principle of obedience, is fitly inserted amongst these rules; the first obligation of man being to the sovereign majesty of God who made him, and all the mutual duties of one to another being derived from that. A man may indeed, from moral principles, be of a mild inoffensive carriage, and do civil right to all men; but this answers not the Divine rule even in these same things, after the way that it requires them. The spiritual and religious observance of these duties towards men, springs from a respect to God, and terminates there too; it begins and ends in Him. And generally, all obedience to His commands, both such as regulate our behaviour towards Himself immediately, and such as relate to man, doth arise from a holy fear of His name. Therefore, this *fear of God,* upon which follows necessarily

the keeping of His commandments, is given us by Solomon as the total sum of man's business and duty, Eccl. xii. *ult.*, and so, the way to solid happiness: he pronounces it *totum hominis, the whole of man.* After he had made his discoveries of all things besides under the sun, gone the whole circuit, and made an exact valuation, he found all besides this to amount to nothing *but vanity and vexation of spirit.* The account he gives of all other things was only for this purpose, to illustrate and establish this truth the more, and to make it the more acceptable; to be a repose after so much weariness, and such a tedious journey, and so, as he speaks there, ver. 10, a word of delight as well as a word of truth; that the mind might sit down and quiet itself in this, from the turmoil and pursuit of vanity, that keeps it busy to no purpose in all other things. But whereas there was emptiness and vanity, that is, just nothing, in all other things, there was not only something to be found, but everything in this one, this *fear of God*, and that *keeping of his commandments*, which is the proper fruit of that fear. All the repeated declaring of vanity in other things, both severally and altogether in that book, are but so many strokes to drive and fasten this nail, (as it is there, ver. 11,) this word of wisdom, which is the sum of all, and contains all the rest. So Job, after a large inquest for wisdom, searching for its vein, as men do for mines of silver and gold, hath the return of a *Non inventum est*, from all the creatures: *The sea says, it is not in me*, &c. But in the close, he finds it in this, *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding.* (Job. xxviii. *ult.*)

Under this fear is comprehended all religion, both inward and outward, all the worship and service of God, and all the observance of His commandments, which is there, Eccl. xii. and elsewhere, expressly joined with it, and therefore is included in it, when it is not expressed. So, Job. xxviii. as above, *To depart from evil is understanding*, repeating in effect the former words by these. So Psal. cxi. 10. It hath in it all

holiness, and obedience; they grow all out of it. It is the *beginning*, and it is the top or consummation of *wisdom*, for the word signifies both.

Think it not, then, a trivial, common matter to speak or hear of this subject; but take it as our great lesson and business here on earth. The best proficients in it have yet need to learn it better, and it requires our incessant diligence and study all our days.

This fear hath in it chiefly these things: 1. A reverential esteem of the majesty of God, which is a main, fundamental thing in religion, and moulds the heart most powerfully to the obedience of His will. 2. A firm belief of the purity of God, and of His power and justice, that He loves holiness, and hates all sin, and can and will punish it. 3. A right apprehension of the bitterness of His wrath, and the sweetness of His love; that His incensed anger is the most terrible and intolerable thing in the world, absolutely the most fearful of all evils, and, on the other side, His love, of all good things the best, the most blessed and delightful, yea, the only blessedness. Life is the name of the sweetest good we know, and yet His *loving-kindness is better than life*, says David, (Psal. lxiii. 3.) 4. It supposes, likewise, sovereign love to God, for His own infinite excellency and goodness. 5. From all these springs a most earnest desire to please Him in all things, and an unwillingness to offend Him in the least, and, because of our danger through the multitude and strength of temptations, and our own weakness, a continual self-suspicion, a holy fear lest we should sin, a care and watchfulness that we sin not, and deep sorrow, and speedy returning and humbling before Him, when we have sinned.

There is, indeed, a base kind of fear, which, in the usual distinction, they called *servile fear;* but to account all fear of the judgments and wrath of God a servile fear, or, (not to stand upon words,) to account such a fear improper to the children of God, I conceive is a wide mistake. Indeed, to fear the punishments of sin, without regard to God and His justice

as the inflicter of them, or to forbear to sin only because of those punishments, so that if a man can be secured from those, he hath no other respect to God that would make him fear to offend,—this is the character of a slavish and base mind.

Again, for a man so to apprehend wrath in relation to himself, as to be still under the horror of it in that notion, and not to apprehend redemption and deliverance by Jesus Christ, is to be under that spirit of bondage, which the Apostle speaks of, Rom. viii. 15. And though a child of God may for a time be under such fear, yet the lively actings of faith and persuasion of God's love, and the feeling of reflex love to Him in the soul, do cast it out, according to that word of the Apostle, (1 John iv. 18,) *True* (or *perfect*) *love casteth out fear.* But to apprehend the punishments which the Lord threatens against sin, as certain and true, and to consider the greatness and fearfulness of them, especially the terror of the Lord's anger and hot displeasure, above all punishments, and (though not only, no, nor chiefly, for these, yet) in contemplation of these, as very great and weighty, to be afraid to offend that God who hath threatened such things as the just reward of sin; this, I say, is not incongruous with the estate of the sons of God, yea, it is their duty and their property even thus to fear.

1st. This is the very end for which God hath published these intimations of His justice, and hath threatened to punish men if they transgress, to the end they may fear and not transgress: so that not to look upon them thus, and not to be affected with them answerably to their design, were a very grievous sin; a slight and disregard put upon the words of the great God.

2dly. Above all others, the children of God have the rightest and clearest knowledge of God, and the deepest belief of His word, and therefore they cannot choose but be afraid, and more afraid than all others, to fall under the stroke of His hand. They know more of the greatness, and truth, and justice of God than others, and therefore they fear when He threatens. *My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee,* (says David,) *and I am afraid of Thy judgments.* (Psal. cxix. 120.) Yea,

they tremble when they hear the sentence against others, or see it executed upon them; it moves them when they see public executions: *Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,* says St. Paul, (2 Cor. v. 11); and they cry out with Moses, (Psalm xc. 11,) *Who knows the power of Thine anger? Even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath!* It is not an imagination or invention, that makes men fear more than they need. His wrath is as terrible as any that fear it most can apprehend, and beyond that. So that this doth not only consist with the estate of the saints, but is their very character, *to tremble at the word* of their Lord. The rest neglect what He says, till death and judgment seize on them; but the godly know and believe that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (Heb. x. 31.)

And though they have firm promises, and a *kingdom that cannot be shaken,* yet they have still this *grace by which they serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;* even in this consideration, that *our God,* even He that is ours by peculiar covenant, *is a consuming fire.* (Heb. xii. 28, 29.)

But indeed, together with this, yea, more than by this, they are persuaded to fear the Lord, by the sense of His great love to them, and by the power of that love that works in them towards Him, and is wrought in them by His. *They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days* (Hos. iii. 5). In those days, His goodness shall manifest itself more than before; the beams of His love shall break forth more abundantly in the days of the Gospel, and shall beat more direct and hotter on the hearts of men; and then, they shall fear Him more, because they shall love Him more.

This fear agrees well both with faith and love, yea, they work this fear. (Compare Psalm xxxi. 23, with Psalm xxxiv. 9; and that same Psalm xxxiv. ver. 8, with ver. 9; and Psalm cxii. ver. 1, with ver. 7.) The heart touched with the load-stone of Divine love, ever trembles with this godly fear, and still looks fixedly by faith to that star of Jacob, Jesus Christ, who guides it to the haven of happiness.

The looking upon God in the face of Jesus Christ, takes off that terror of His countenance that drives men from Him; and in the smiles of His love that appear through Christ, there is such a power as unites their hearts to Him, but *unites* them so as to *fear His name*, as the Psalmist's prayer is, Psalm lxxxvi. 11. He puts such a fear in their hearts as will not cause them to depart from, yea, causes that they *shall not depart from Him.* (Jer. xxxii. 40.)

And this is the purest and highest kind of godly fear, that springs from love: and though it excludes not the consideration of wrath, as terrible in itself, and even some fear of it, yet it may surmount it; and doubtless, where much of that love possesses the heart, it will sometimes drown the other consideration, so that it shall scarcely be perceptible at all, and will constantly set it aside, and will persuade a man, purely for the goodness and loveliness of God, to fear to offend Him, though there were no interest at all in it of a man's own personal misery or happiness.

But do we thus fear the Lord our God? What mean, then, our oaths, and excesses, and uncleanness, our covetousness, and generally, our unholy and unchristian conversation? This fear would make men tremble, so as to shake them out of their profane customs, and to shake their beloved sins out of their bosoms. The knowledge of the Holy One causes fear of Him. (Prov. ix. 18.)

But alas! we know Him not, and therefore we fear Him not. Knew we but a little of the great majesty of God, how holy He is, and how powerful a punisher of unholiness, we should not dare provoke him thus, who *can kill both body and soul, and cast them into hell,* as our Saviour tells us, Matt. x. 28. And He will do so with both, if we will not fear Him, because he can do so; and it is told us that we may fear, and so not feel, this heavy wrath. A little lively, spiritual knowledge would go far, and work much, which a great deal, such as ours is, doth not. Some such word as that of Joseph, would do much, being engraven on the heart, *Shall I do this evil, and sin against*

God? (Gen. xxxix. 9.) It would make a man be at no more liberty to sin in secret than in public; no, not to dispense with the sin of his thoughts, more than the openest words or actions. If some grave wise man did see our secret behaviour and our thoughts, should we not look more narrowly to them, and not suffer such rovings and follies in ourselves? Surely, therefore, we forget God's eye, which we could not, if we thought of it aright, but should respect it more, than if all men did see within us.

Nor is this the main point to be pressed upon the ungodly only, but the children of God themselves have much need to be put in mind of this fear, and to increase in it. How often do they abuse the indulgence of so loving a Father! They have not their thoughts so constantly full of Him, are not *in His fear* (as Solomon advises) *all the day long*, (Prov. xxiii. 17,) but many times slip out of His directing hand, and wander from Him, and do not so deeply fear His displeasure, and so watch over all their ways, as becomes them: they do not keep close by Him, and wait on his voice, and obey it constantly, and are not so humbled and afflicted in their repentings for sin, as this fear requires, but only in a slight and superficial degree. They offer much lip-labour, which is but dead service to the living God. These are things, my beloved, that concern us much, and that we ought seriously to lay to heart; for even they who are freed from condemnation, yet if they will walk fearlessly and carelessly at any time, He hath ways enough to make them smart for it. And if there were nothing more, should it not wound them deeply to think how they requite so great, so unspeakable love?

Honour the king.] This was the particular that the Apostle pressed and insisted on before; and here he repeats it, as a special duty of the Second Table, and a vindication of religion, which is wrongfully blamed in this point; but of this before.

This is out of question in the general; only in the measure and rule of it, is the difference. And surely they cannot possibly be satisfied, who are so drunk with power as to admit of

none at all,—no measure nor rate for it, no banks nor channel for those rivers, the hearts and wills of kings, to run in, but think that if they like to run over all, they may.

This is such a wild conceit as destroys both all law of reason in human societies, and all religious obligation to the laws of God. For the qualification and measure, I shall mention no other than that in the text, that it be always regulated by what here goes before it, *the fear of God;* that we never think of any such obedience and honour due to kings, as crosseth that *fear* which is due to God. Let kings, and subjects, and all know that they are absolutely bound to this. It is spoken to kings, (Psalm ii. 11,) *Serve the Lord in fear;* and to all men, (Psalm ix. 6,) *Fear before Him, all the earth, for He is great, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.* What is man in respect of Him? Shall a worm, *whose breath is in his nostrils,* stand in competition with the ever-living God? Shall an earthen *potsherd strive with his Maker? Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth;*—let them work one against another, and try which is hardest, and so they shall often break each other;—but *Woe to him that striveth with his Maker.* (Isa. xlv. 9.) There is nothing here but certain perishing. As we conclude in the question with the Church of Rome, of the honour due to saints and angels, honour let them have, with good reason, but not Divine honour, not God's peculiar; so in this, *Give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,* but withal, still *Give to God the things that are God's.*

But it is a miserable estate of a kingdom, when debates on this head arise and increase; and their happiness is, when kings and people concur to honour God: *For those that honour Him, He will honour, and whosoever despises Him, shall be lightly esteemed.* (1 Sam. ii. 30.)

Ver. 18. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

Ver. 19. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

Ver. 20. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffetted for your faults, ye

shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.

Thy word (says the Psalmist) *is a light to my feet, and a lamp to my paths* (Psal. cxix. 105);—not only a light to please his eyes, by the excellent truths and comforts that are in it, but withal a lamp to direct his feet in the precepts and rules of life that it gives: not only to inform and delight his mind, but also to order his course. That philosopher was deservedly commended, who drew knowledge most this way, and therefore was said to have brought philosophy from the clouds to dwell amongst men, calling it from empty speculations to a practical strain. Thus we are taught in spiritual knowledge by the word of God. The Son, the eternal Word, when he came to dwell with men, and so brought life, and wisdom, and all blessings from the Heavens down unto them, taught them both by his doctrine and perfect example, how to walk; and his Apostles do, conformably, aim at this in their holy writings, joining with the mysteries of faith, those rules of life which shew men the straight way to happiness.

And as it is spoken of the largeness of Solomon's wisdom, that *he spake of all trees, from the cedar in Lebanon, to the hyssop that grows out of the wall,* (1 Kings iv. 33,) so in this we may see the perfection of the holy Scriptures, that they give those directions that are needful to all ranks and sorts of men. They speak not only of the duties of kings, how they ought to behave themselves on their thrones, and the duty of their subjects towards then in that dignity, and how ministers and others ought to carry themselves in the *house of God;* but they come into private houses, and give economic rules for them; teaching parents, and children, and masters, yea, and servants, how to acquit themselves one to another. Thus here, *Servants, be subject to your masters.*

As this is a just plea for all the people of God, that they have a right to the use of this Book, being so useful for all sorts, and that they ought not to be debarred from it; so it is a just plea against a great part of those that debar themselves

the use of it, through slothfulness and earthly-mindedness, seeing it is so contempered, that there may be many things, yea, all the main things in it profitable for all, fitted to the use of the lowest estate and lowest capacities of men. Yea, it takes (as we see) particular notice of their condition; stoops down to take the meanest servant by the hand, to lead him in the way to heaven; and not only in that part of it which is the general way of Christians, but even in those steps of it that lie within the walk of their particular calling; as here, teaching not only the duties of a Christian, but of a *Christian servant.*

Obs. 1. The Scriptures are a deep that few can wade far into, and none can wade through, (as those waters, Ezek. lxvii. 5,) but yet all may come to the brook and refresh themselves with drinking of the streams of its living water, and go in a little way, according to their strength and stature. Now this (I say) may be spoken to our shame, and I wish it might shame you to amendment, that so many of you either use not the Scriptures at all, or, in using, do not use them; you turn over the leaves, and, it may be, run through the lines, and consider not what they advise you. Masters, learn your part, and servants too, hearken what they say to you, for they pass not you by, they vouchsafe to speak to you too, but you vouchsafe not to hear them, and observe their voice. How can you think that the reading of this Book concerns you not, when you may hear it address such particular directions to you? Wisdom goes not only to the gates of palaces but to the common gates of the cities, and to the public highways, and calls to the simplest that she may make them wise. Besides that you dishonour God, you prejudice yourselves; for does not that neglect of God and His word justly procure the disorder and disobedience of your servants towards you, as a fit punishment from His righteous hand, although they are unrighteous, and are procuring further judgment to themselves in so doing? And not only thus is your neglect of the word a cause of your trouble by the justice of God, but it is so in regard of the nature of the word, inasmuch as, if you would respect it, and

make use of it in your houses, it would teach your servants to respect and obey you, as here you see it speaks for you; and therefore you wrong both it and yourselves, when you silence it in your families.

Obs. 2. The Apostle having spoken of subjection to public authority, adds this of subjection to private domestic authority. It is a thing of much concernment, the right ordering of families; for all other societies, civil and religious, are made up of these. Villages, and cities, and churches, and commonwealths, and kingdoms, are but a collection of families; and therefore, such as these are, for the most part, such must the whole societies predominantly be. One particular house is but a very small part of a kingdom, yet the wickedness and lewdness of that house, be it but of the meanest in it, of servants one or more, and though it seem but a small thing, yet goes in to make up that heap of sin which provokes the wrath of God, and draws on public calamity.

And this particularly, when it declines into disorder, proves a public evil. When servants grow generally corrupt and disobedient, and unfaithful, though they be the lowest part, yet the whole body of a commonwealth cannot but feel very much the evil of it; as a man does when his legs and feet grow diseased, and begin to fail him.

We have here, 1. Their duty. 2. The due extent of it. 3. The right principle of it.

1st, Their duty, *Be subject.* Keep your order and station under your masters, and that *with fear*, and inward reverence of mind and respect to them; for that is the very life of all obedience. Then their obedience hath in it diligent doing, and patient suffering: both these are in that word, *Be subject.* Do faithfully to your utmost that which is intrusted to you, and obey all their just commands, for action indeed goes no further; but suffer patiently even their unjust rigours and severities. And this being the harder part of the two, and yet a part that the servants of those times bore, many of them being more hardly and slavishly used than any with us, (especially

those that were Christian servants under unchristian masters,) therefore the Apostle insists most on this. And this is the extent of the obedience here required, that it be paid to all kinds of masters, *not to the good only, but also to the evil;* not only to obey, but to suffer, and suffer patiently, and not only deserved, but even wrongful and unjust punishment.

Now because this particular concerns Servants, let them reflect upon their own carriage and examine it by this rule; and truly the greatest part of them will be found very unconformable to it, being either closely fraudulent and deceitful, or grossly stubborn and disobedient, abusing the lenity and mildness of their masters, or murmuring at their just severity. So far are they from the patient endurance of the least undue word of reproof, much less of sharper punishment, either truly, or, in their opinion, undeserved. And truly, if any who profess religion, dispense with this in themselves, they mistake the matter very much; for religion ties them the more, whether children or servants, to be most submissive and obedient even to the worst kind of parents and masters, *always in the Lord;* not obeying any unjust command, though they may and ought to suffer patiently (as it is here) their unjust reproofs or punishments.

But on the other side, this does not justify, nor at all excuse the unmerciful austerities and unbridled passion of masters; it is still a perverseness and crookedness in them, as the word is here, σκολιοῖς, and must have its own name, and shall have its proper reward from the sovereign Master and Lord of all the world.

2dly. There is here also the due extent of this duty, namely, *To the froward.* It is a more deformed thing, to have a distorted, crooked mind, or a froward spirit, than any crookedness of the body. How can he that hath servants under him, expect their obedience, when he cannot command his own passion, but is a slave to it? And unless much conscience of duty possess servants, (more than is commonly to be found with them,) it cannot but work a master into much disaffection and disesteem with them, when he is of a turbulent

spirit, a *troubler of his own house*, imbittering his affairs and commands with rigidness and passion, and ready to take things by that side which may offend and trouble him, thinking his servant slights his call, when he may as well think he hears him not, and upon every slight occasion, real or imagined, flying out into reproachful speeches, or proud threats, contrary to the Apostle St. Paul's rule, which he sets over against the duty of servants: *Forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in heaven, and that there is no respect of persons with Him.* (Eph. vi. 9.) Think, therefore, when you shall appear before the judgment seat of God, that your carriage shall be examined and judged as well as theirs; and think, that though we regard much those differences of masters and servants, yet they are nothing with God, they vanish away in His presence.

Consider *who made thee to differ*. Might He not, with a turn of His hand, have made your stations just contrary, have made thee the servant, and thy servant the master? But we willingly forget those things that should compose our mind to humility and meekness, and blow them up with such fancies as please and feed our natural vanity, and make us somebody in our own account.

However, that Christian servant who falls into the hands of a froward master, will not be beaten out of his station and duty of obedience by all the hard and wrongful usage he meets with, but will take that as an opportunity of exercising the more obedience and patience, and will be the more cheerfully patient, because of his innocence, as the Apostle here exhorts.

Men do indeed look sometimes upon this as a just plea for impatience, that they suffer unjustly, which yet is very ill logic; for, as the philosopher said, "Would any man that frets because he suffers unjustly, wish to deserve it, that he might be patient?" Now, to hear them, they seem to speak so, when they exclaim, that the thing that vexeth them most, is, that they have not deserved any such thing as is inflicted on them. Truly, desert of punishment may make a man more silent upon it, but innocence, rightly considered, makes him

more patient. Guiltiness stops a man's mouth, indeed, in suffering, but surely it doth not quiet his mind; on the contrary, it is that which mainly disturbs and grieves him; it is the sting of suffering, as sin is said to be of death, 1 Cor. xv. 56. And therefore, when there is no guilt, the pain of sufferings cannot but be much abated; yea, the Apostle here declares, that to suffer undeserved, and withal patiently, is glorious to a man, and acceptable to God. It is commendable, indeed, to be truly patient even in deserved sufferings, but the deserving them tarnishes the lustre of that patience, and makes it look more like constraint; which is the Apostle's meaning, in preferring spotless suffering much before it. And this is indeed the true glory of it, that it pleaseth God; (so it is rendered in the close of the 20th verse for the other word of *glory* in the beginning of it;) it is a pleasing thing in God's eyes, and therefore He will thank a man for it, as the word is, χάρις παρὰ Θεῷ. Though we owe all our patience under all kinds of afflictions, as a duty to Him, and though this grace is His own gift, yet, He hath obliged himself by His royal word not only to accept of it, but to praise it, and reward it in His children. Though they lose their thanks at the world's hands, and be rather scoffed at and taunted in all their doings and sufferings, it is no matter; they can expect no other there; but their *reward is on high*, in the sure and faithful hand of their Lord.

How often do men work earnestly, and do and suffer much for the uncertain wages of glory and thanks amongst men! And how many of them fall short of their reckoning, either dying before they came to that state where they think to find it, or not finding it where they looked for it, and so they live but to feel the pain of their disappointment! Or, if they do attain their end, such glory and thanks as men have to give them, what amounts it to? s it any other than a handful of nothing, the breath of their mouths, and themselves much like it, a vapour dying out in the air? The most real thanks they give, their solidest rewards, are but such as a man cannot take home with him; or if they go so far with him, yet at furthest

he must leave them at the door, when he is to enter his everlasting home. All the riches, and palaces, and monuments of honour that he had, and that are erected to him after death, as if he had then some interest in them, reach him not at all. Enjoy them who will, he does not, *he hath no portion of all that is done under the sun;* his own end is, to him, the end of the world.

But he that would have abiding glory and thanks, must turn his eye another way for them. All men desire glory, but they know neither what it is, nor how it is to be sought. He is upon the only right bargain of this kind, *whose praise* (according to St. Paul's word) *is not of men, but of God.* (Rom. ii. 29.) If men commend him not, he accounts it no loss, nor any gain if they do; for he is bound for a country where that coin goes not, and whither he cannot carry it, and therefore he gathers it not. That which he seeks in all, is, that he may be approved and accepted of God, whose thanks is no less, to the least of those He accepts, than a crown of unfading glory. Not a poor *servant* that fears His name, and is obedient and patient for His sake, but shall be so rewarded.

There be some kind of graces and good actions, which men (such as regard any grace) take special notice of, and commend highly,—such as are of a magnific and remarkable nature, as martyrdom, or doing or suffering for religion in some public way. There be again, other obscure graces, which, if men despise them not, yet they esteem not much, as meekness, gentleness, and patience under private crosses, known to few or none. And yet these are of great account with God, and therefore should be so with us: these are indeed of more universal use, whereas the other are but for high times, as we say, for rare occasions: these are every one's work, but few are called to the acting of the other. And the least of these graces shall not lose its reward, in whose person soever, as St. Paul tells us, speaking of this same subject. *Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.* (Eph. vi. 8.)

This is the bounty of that great Master we serve. For what are we and all we can do, that there should be the name of a reward attached to it? Yet He keeps all in reckoning; not a poor lame prayer, not a tear, nor a sigh poured forth before Him, shall be lost. Not any cross, whether from His own hand immediately, or coming through men's hands, that is taken, what way soever it come, as out of His hand, and carried patiently, yea, and welcomed, and embraced for His sake, but He observes our so entertaining of it. Not an injury that the meanest servant bears Christianly, but goes upon account with Him. And He sets them down so, as that they bear much value through His estimate and way of reckoning of them, though in themselves they are all less than nothing; as a worthless counter stands for hundreds or thousands, according to the place you set it in. Happy they who have to deal with such a Lord, and who, be they servants or masters, are vowed servants to Him! *When He comes, His reward shall be with Him.* (Rev. xxii. 12.)

The third thing is, the Principle of this obedience and patience. *For conscience towards God.* This imports, first, the knowledge of God, and of His will in some due measure, and then a conscientious respect unto Him and His will so known, taking it for their only rule in doing and suffering.

Observe, 1. This declares to us the freeness of the grace of God in regard to men's outward quality, that He doth often bestow the riches of His grace upon persons of mean condition. It is supposed here, that this *conscience towards God,* this saving knowledge and fear of His name, is to be found in Servants: therefore, the Apostle takes them within the address of his letter amongst those who are *elect, according to the foreknowledge of God,* (ch. i. ver. 2,) and sharers of those dignities he mentions (ch. ii. ver. 9) *a chosen generation.* The honour of a spiritual royalty may be concealed under the meanness of a servant; and this grace may be conferred upon the servant, and denied to the master, as is here supposed. It may fall out, that a perverse crooked-minded master may have a servant

uprightly minded, being endowed with a tender conscience towards God. And thus the Lord does to counteract the pride of man, and to set off the lustre of His own free grace. He hath all to choose from, and yet chooses where men would least imagine. (See Matt. xi. 25; 1 Cor. i. 27.)

Observe, 2. Grace finds a way to exert itself in every estate where it exists, and regulates the soul according to the particular duties of that estate. Whether it find a man high or low, a master or a servant, it requires not a change of his station, but works a change on his heart, and teaches him how to live in it. The same spirit that makes a Christian master pious, and gentle, and prudent in commanding, makes a Christian servant faithful, and obsequious, and diligent in obeying. A skilful engraver makes you a statue indifferently of wood, or stone, or marble, as they are put into his hand; so Grace forms a man to a Christian way of walking, in any estate. There is a way for him in the meanest condition to glorify God, and to adorn the profession of religion; no estate so low, as to be shut out from that; and a rightly informed and rightly affected conscience towards God, shews a man that way, and causes him to walk in it. As the astrologers say, that the same stars that made Cyrus to be chosen king amongst the armies of men when he came to be a man, made him to be chosen king amongst the shepherd's children, when he was a child; thus Grace will have its proper operation in every estate.

In this, men readily deceive themselves; they can do any thing well in imagination, better than the real task that is in their hands. They presume that they could do God good service in some place of command, who serve Him not, as becomes them, in that which is by far the easier, the place of obeying, wherein he hath set them. They think that if they had the ability and opportunities that some men have, they would do much more for religion, and for God, than they do; and yet they do nothing, but spoil a far lower part than that, which is their own, and is given them to study and act aright

in. But our folly and self-ignorance abuse us: it is not our part to choose what we should be, but to be what we are, to His glory who gives us to be such. Be thy condition never so mean yet, thy *conscience towards God*, if it be within thee, will find itself work in that. If it be little that is intrusted to thee, in regard of thy outward condition, or any other way, *be thou faithful in that little*, as our Saviour speaks, and thy reward shall not be little: *He shall make thee ruler over much.* (Matt. xxv. 23.)

Observe, 3. As a corrupt mind debaseth the best and most excellent callings and actions, so the lowest are raised above themselves, and ennobled by a spiritual mind. Magistrates or ministers, though their calling and employments be high, may have low intentions, and draw down their high calling to those low intentions; they may seek themselves, and their own selfish ends, and neglect God. And a sincere Christian may elevate his low calling by this conscience towards God, observing His will, and intending His glory in it. An eagle may fly high, and yet have its eye down upon some carrion on the earth: even so a man may be standing on the earth, and on some low part of it, and yet have his eye upon heaven, and be contemplating it. That which men cannot at all see in one another, is the very thing that is most considerable in their actions, namely, the principle whence they flow, and the end to which they tend. This is the form and life of actions,—that by which they are earthly or heavenly. Whatsoever be the matter of them, the spiritual mind hath that alchemy indeed, of turning base metals into gold,—earthly employments into heavenly. The handy-work of an artisan or servant who regards God, and eyes Him even in that work, is much holier than the *prayer of a hypocrite?* and a servant's enduring the private wrongs and harshness of a froward master, bearing it patiently *for conscience towards God*, is more acceptable to God, than the sufferings of such as may endure much for a public good cause, without a good and upright heart.

This habitude and posture of the heart towards God, the

Apostle St. Paul presses much upon Servants, (Eph. vi. 8,) as being very needful to allay the hard labour and harsh usage of many of them. This is the way to make all easy, to undergo it for God. There is no pill so bitter, but respect and love to God will sweeten it. And this is a very great refreshment and comfort to Christians in the mean estate of servants or other labouring men, that they may offer up their hardship and bodily labour as a sacrifice to God, and say, Lord, this is the station wherein Thou hast set me in this world, and I desire to serve Thee in it. What I do is for Thee, and what I suffer I desire to bear patiently and cheerfully for Thy sake, in submission and obedience to Thy will.

For conscience.] In this there is, 1. A reverential compliance with God's disposal, both in allotting to them that condition of life, and in particularly choosing their master for them; though possibly not the mildest and pleasantest, yet the fittest for their good. There is much in firmly believing this, and in heartily submitting to it; for we would, naturally, rather carve for ourselves, and shape our own estate to our mind, which is a most foolish, yea, an impious presumption: as if we were wiser than He who hath done it, and as if there were not as much, and, it may be, more possibility of true contentment in a mean, than in a far higher condition! The master's mind is often more toiled than the servant's body. But if our condition be appointed us, at least we would have a voice in some qualifications and circumstances of it; as in this, if a man must serve, he would wish willingly that God would allot him a meek, gentle master. And so, in other things, if we must be sick, we would be well accommodated, and not want helps; but to have sickness, and want means and friends for our help, this we cannot think of without horror. But this submission to God is never right, till all that concerns us be given up into His hand, to do with it, and with every article and circumstance of it, as seems good in His eyes. 2. In this *conscience*, there is a religious and observant respect to the rule which God hath set men to walk by in that condition; so that their

obedience depends not upon any external inducement, failing when that fails, but flows from an inward impression of the law of God upon the heart. Thus, a servant's obedience and patience will not be pinned to the goodness and equity of his master, but when that fails, will subsist upon its own inward ground; and so, generally, in all other estates. This is the thing that makes sure and constant walking; makes a man *step even* in the ways of God. When a man's obedience springs from that unfailing, unchanging reason, the command of God, it is a natural motion, and therefore keeps on, and rather grows than abates; but they who are moved by things outward, must often fail, because those things are not constant in their moving; as, for instance, when a people are much acted on by the spirit of their rulers, as the Jews when they had good kings. 3. In this *conscience*, there is a tender care of the glory of God and the adornment of religion, which the Apostle premised before these particular duties, as a thing to be specially regarded in them. The honour of our Lord's name, is that which we should set up as the mark to aim all our actions at. But alas! either we think not on it, or our hearts slip out, and start from their aim, *like bows of deceit*, as the word is, Psal. lxxviii. 57. 4. There is the comfortable persuasion of God's approbation and acceptance, (as it is expressed in the following verse, of which somewhat before,) and the hope of that reward He hath promised, as it is Col. iii. 24. *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.* No less than *the inheritance!* So, then, such servants as these are *sons and heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ.* Thus he that is a servant may be in a far more excellent state than his master. The servant may hope for, and aim at a kingdom, while the master is embracing a dunghill. And such a one will think highly of God's free grace, and the looking ever to that inheritance, makes him go cheerfully through all pains and troubles here, as *light* and *momentary*, and not worth the naming in comparison of *that glory that shall be revealed.* In the mean time, the best and

most easy condition of the sons of God cannot satisfy them, nor stay their sighs and *groans, waiting* and longing for *that day of their full redemption.* (Rom. viii. 16, 23.)

Now this is the great rule, not only for servants, but for all the servants of God in what state soever, *to set the Lord always before them,* (Psal. xvi. 8,) and to study, with St. Paul, *to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man;* (Acts xxiv. 16;) to eye, and to apply constantly to their actions and their inward thoughts, the command of God; to walk by that rule abroad, and at home in their houses, and in the several ways of their calling; (as an exact workman is ever and anon laying his rule to his work, and squaring it;) and *for the conscience they have towards God,* to do and suffer His will cheerfully in every thing, being content that He choose their condition and their trials for them; only desirous to be assured, that He hath chosen them for his own, and given them a right to the *glorious liberty of the sons of God,* (Rom. viii. 21); still endeavouring to walk in that way which leads to it, overlooking *this moment,* and all things in it, accounting it a very indifferent matter what is their outward state here, provided they may be happy in eternity. Whether we be high or low here, bond or free, it imports little, seeing that all these differences shall be so quickly at an end, and there shall not be so much as any track or footstep of them left. With particular men, it is so in their graves; you may distinguish the greater from the less by their tombs, but by their dust you cannot; and with the whole world it shall be so in the end. All monuments and palaces, as well as cottages, shall be made fire, as our Apostle tells us. *The elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all the works therein, shall be burnt up.* (2 Pet. iii. 10.)

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